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Domains of Difference: Gender, Class and Ethnicity in the Novels of Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan c. 1802-1811

by

Carol Ann Hart

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Resarch in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Domains of Difference: Gender, Class and Ethnicity in the Novels of Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan c. 1802-1811*. submitted by Carol Ann Hart in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

To Phyllis and Fred Hart

Abstract

This thesis is a study of five novels, St. Clair; or the Heiress of Desmond (c.1802), The Novice of Saint Dominick (1805), The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale (1806), Woman: or, Ida of Athens (1809), and The Missionary: An Indian Tale (1811). They were published by Sydney Owenson before her signature changed to 'Lady Morgan' in 1812. Although all but one are long out of print, I argue that the five works are an ensemble that participated importantly in the discursive production of ethnic nationalism and the post-Revolutionary nation state. Introducecd by an essay that locates the author and her text in history and culture, the argument is supported by close readings that examine the formal elements of her prose. The readings include overviews of the national histories, cultural discourses, and contemporary political issues embodied in the narratives. The study situates them in the postcolonial context, but it does not rely exclusively on postcolonial hermeneutics for interpretation and assessment. Various categories and genres of historical and cultural critique provide substance and method in an inquiry aiming to isolate the factors that made Sydney Owenson's fiction a participant in modern state formation.

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Introduction

Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, was one of the most prominent authors in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century. Her reputation was based on nine novels published between 1802 and 1835, although she also published poetry, essays, drama, a biography and three very successful travelogues. Like many other writers in the period, she used the novel as a medium of social debate and ideological penetration, and her fiction was provocative and controversial. Her main concern was colonialism, but her treatment of the topic incorporated a wide-ranging social critique that addressed issues of gender, class, religion and subjectivity. Her views were embodied in narratives aiming to facilitate the emancipation of women, Ireland and other marginal members of the British political nation. They gave her a public voice during a period of intense ideological conflict, not only between nations vying for world hegemony but also between classes and communities struggling for power within Britain and other imperialist formations.

Lady Morgan's writing reflects the convergence of national, international and personal history at a pivotal moment in the development of Britain and the West. She published her first novel in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, the Irish Revolution of 1798 and the Act of Union which in 1800 merged Great Britain and Ireland into the United Kingdom. Her fiction is shaped by the discourses that produced the decade of political upheaval and rooted in her identity as an Irish subject

at a watershed of English-Irish relations. Although there was a large body of support for the Union in Ireland, she was one of the many who saw it as the country's darkest hour, and her practice of fiction was aimed at preserving the separate identity of a nation that had lost its political autonomy and was now threatened with cultural extinction.

My thesis focuses on the five novels published before her marriage to Sir Charles Morgan in 1812: St. Clair; or the Heiress of Desmond (c. 1802), The Novice of Saint Dominick (1805), The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale (1806), Woman: or, Ida of Athens (1809), and The Missionary: An Indian Tale (1811). In contrast to her later novels, works of social realism concentrated on Ireland, they are romantic parables set in a variety of locations with Celtic roots. They disguise controversial commentary on contemporary Britain in narratives of other times and places and refashion the image of various colonial backwaters of metropolitan Europe. The displacement of polemical accounts of the present into the past had many precedents in the Western literary tradition, but the tales were nonetheless innovative in their production of propaganda. With the fiction published between 1802 and 1811, Owenson became one of the first writers to demonstrate the novel's potential for constructing national identity across ethnic, class and religious lines.

The departure was enabled by a romantic Celtomania derived in part from seventeenth and eighteenth-century attempts to establish linguistic links between Western Europe and the Orient. The philological endeavour gave rise to speculation that a tradition of civilisation different from the dominant Roman tradition had moved

from the Middle East through the Mediterranean to the peripheries of Western Europe. The theory connected the 'Kelt' or 'Syth' barbarians who originated north of Greece with the classical Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians and the Celtic peoples of southern France and the British Isles, uniting them in an unbroken chain to an oriental tradition of civility that predated the aggressive Roman heritage which shaped the core societies of Britain and France.[1] The idea is reflected in Owenson's portraits of alterity, which link Ireland, supposedly the Western limit of Celto-Phoenician civilisation, Occitania, Greece and India, another probable destination of the migratory Celts. Each of these locations is represented as the repository of a civilisation that is more ancient and culturally sophisticated than the civilisation of the invaders who presently dominate the indigenous community.[2]

Although formal political history is not the focus of this inquiry, a general knowledge of the postcolonial histories of Owenson's settings is a prerequisite of an informed evaluation of her fiction. This is particularly true of Irish postcolonial history, which functions in the works under discussion as a generic model of imperialism, a paradigm of the corruptive effects of colonialism, and a template of resistance to political and cultural assimilation by stronger powers. In the interest of clarity, then, I will devote some space here in the introduction to an overview of the historical process that culminated in the Act of Union.[3]

The colonial history of modern Ireland began in 1166 when Dermot MacMurrough, the King of Leinster, was deposed by rival Irish chieftains and sailed to England, where he recruited a contingent of Norman-Welsh mercenaries to help him

recover his throne. When the Normans seized control of parts of Ireland in their own right, Henry II arrived with an army and proclaimed feudal lordship over the island. During the next century the Normans made further gains but failed to completely reduce the Irish, and during the fourteenth century England lost effective control of the country. The native Irish recovered two-thirds of Ireland and the Gaelic language and way of life gradually prevailed over the Norman (typically called the Old English in histories of Ireland) language and manners.

From the time of their arrival in Ireland Norman lords sometimes married women of the Gaelic aristocracy, and by the fourteenth century the practice was becoming common. The Statutes of Kilkenny passed in 1366 made Irish customs and marriages illegal for subjects of English descent, but the laws did not halt the process of assimilation. During the fourteenth century many of the common settlers planted by the Normans returned to England and the gentry became more and more Hibernicized. In 1460, when England was weakened by civil war and a century of warfare with France, the Old English Parliament of Ireland asserted that legally, the country was independent of England except for the personal, feudal link with the Crown.

The Tudor dynasty that emerged triumphant from the Wars of the Roses was against Irish Home Rule, but the practice was not completely curtailed for more than a century. The government of Ireland had formerly been controlled by a viceroy sent out from England, but in the fifteenth century it became the preserve of three powerful Old English families, the Earls of Desmond, Kildare and Ormonde. The

Earls had strong blood ties and cultural links with the Gaelic families that exercised local control in many areas, and they governed with Irish support. J. C. Beckett stresses the exclusivity of the Old English regime and argues that during the Middle Ages Irish society was permanently divided into coloniser and colonised.[4] Other twentieth-century authorities, however, emphasise the unifying effect of the ethnic blending resulting from intermarriage and Norman acculturation to Gaelic language, law, dress, customs and manners. Edmund Curtis, for example, observes that the late fourteenth-century Gaelic and Norman aristocracy were "almost indistinguishable. . . in their use of the Irish language, their patronage of Brehons and bards, their standing forces and love of local independence."[5] Thus, "Ireland became a checkerboard for an aristocracy derived from both races, in many ways acting together," a social environment that produced a Gaelic literary renaissance.[6] Owenson's use of history reflects the views of Curtis and other historians who have perceived in fourteenth and fifteenth century Ireland the embryo of an autonomous polyethnic state.

The independence of the Gaelic and Old English lords was diminished under the earlier Tudors and permanently ended in the final days of Elizabeth's reign. The Reformation, the growth of English monarchical power and the fear that Ireland would become a base for England's enemies led to a concerted attempt to reestablish English authority, a policy that provoked a series of revolts by confederations of Old English and Irish magnates. Uprisings under the Earls of Desmond and Kildare culminated in a national rebellion led by Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, which was put down in 1603. Aristocratic Home Rule in Ireland was abolished, Irish institutions

were suppressed, systematic efforts at colonization were made, and the Anglican creed became the official religion. But most of the established population remained loyal to Catholicism, and the nation divided on religious lines.

Opposition to Protestantism and English domination of Ireland produced another series of revolts that occurred intermittently throughout the seventeenth century. They began in 1641 with a rebellion that ushered in two decades of civil war and disturbances that were put down brutally by Oliver Cromwell. In 1689 Catholic Ireland rose again in support of James Stuart and was again defeated in the war that consolidated constitutional monarchy in England. Like the rebellions in the sixteenth century, each of the conflicts was followed by plantations of English and Scots settlers on lands confiscated from the losers. The Old English lost their position of dominance in the country, many Catholic members of the ruling class and intelligentsia emigrated to Europe, and carefully organised attempts were made to suppress the Irish language. The events of the seventeenth century created permanent tensions between the Protestant and Catholic populations of Ireland and intensified the animosity between Ireland and England. To the Catholic Irish, England seemed committed to a politics of genocide while the English became firmly convinced that the Irish must be governed by coercion.

After the Treaty of Limerick which ended the Williamite War in 1691, the bulk of the Irish army followed James Stuart to France, and most of its members became mercenaries in the armies of Continental monarchs. With their departure Ireland lost a large proportion of the old ruling class, and resistance to English rule ended for a

century. During that time the emigration of the Catholic gentry continued, and many Catholics who stayed in Ireland became Protestant. The dispersals and conversions were catalysed by the penal laws, legislation designed to secure the hegemony of the Anglican minority known as the Ascendancy. Education in the native language and religion was prohibited and a whole code was passed to bar Roman Catholics from the land, the army, the electorate, commerce and the law. Roman Catholics could inherit only from one another and they could not purchase land, lend on mortgages, or take a lease over thirty-one years. The estates of Catholic landowners were divided when they died among all their sons, but if the eldest conformed to the Anglican Church of Ireland, he inherited the whole estate according to the English law of primogeniture. Catholics were excluded from offices in the bureaucracy, corporations and the army, and from voting in elections. They were also forbidden to serve as grand jurors and severely penalised for practising law. The lower classes were not much affected by the civil and political disabilities, but they suffered from other provisions of the code. They were forced to pay tithes to the Established Church and heavy rents to landlords who were mostly of alien stock and language. They were unable to secure leases on favourable terms and forced to labour on roads and other municipal projects. Their situation declined steadily throughout the eighteenth century, and the Irish peasantry became one of the most wretched agrarian populations in Europe.

Contrary to what one would expect, organised resistance to British rule in Ireland came from the Protestant minority whose position depended on British backing. One reason for this apparent contradiction was that Irish society was divided

horizontally on social and economic lines as well as vertically by religious affiliation. Beneath the Protestant gentry and nobility was a rising professional and mercantile middle class that was often in conflict with the landowning establishment. The landlords' monopoly of legislative power and government patronage was a source of resentment to manufacturers and professional men who wanted a political role commensurate with their contributions to the country and a legislature that would promote Irish trade and commerce. Middle-class discontent was shared by some members of the Protestant working class of artisans, tradesmen and tenant farmers who were not represented in parliament and were poorer than some Catholics. Because Catholics were not barred from trade, a Catholic middle class of wealthy merchants had developed by mid-century, and a few Catholic families managed to hold on to their land. But the merchants and gentry were divided by the Irish aristocracy's contempt for tradesmen, and neither group was willing to risk its tenuous position by political agitation. For the same reason, the Catholic clerical establishment was conservative, and the official policy of the Roman Church became avidly Tory and Royalist. Thus, the oppressed tenantry who comprised the majority of the Irish people had no leadership to organise their opposition or defend their interests.

During the long reign of the Hanoverians, the impoverished successors of the hereditary bards composed countless laments for the old Gaelic and Norman aristocracy serving in the armies of Spain, France and other European nations. They were composed in the form of 'Aislings' or 'Visions' that represented Ireland as a woman in distress and foretold her rescue by a prince from over the water. The theme

was a symbolic expression of the peasants' dream of reestablishing the pre-Cromwellian order through the restoration of the Gaelic Stuarts. Any real possibility of such an event ended with the failure of the Jacobite rising in Scotland in 1746, but the lyrics were passed from generation to generation, and nostalgia for the past did not subside. Peasant discontent with their lot was manifested politically in secret societies that retaliated violently against oppressive landlords and tithe- proctors, but the organisations and actions were localised, and until the last decade of the century, there was no concerted attempt to overthrow the existing regime.

Some of the Catholic grievances were shared by the Dissenting Protestants, most of them Presbyterians of Scots descent, whose ancestors were planted in Ulster on land confiscated after the failure of the O'Neill Rebellion. They developed a strong industrial and agrarian economy in the North, but despite their importance in national economic life they were disqualified for public office by a sacramental test and therefore excluded from political power both local and central. Not only were they forced like Catholics to pay tithes to the Episcopal Church of Ireland; their ministers were not legally recognised as clergymen. The Ulster Presbyterian community became increasingly hostile to the establishment in the period after 1718, when Anglican landlords doubled or trebled the price of leases that expired at that time. Thousands of tenants emigrated to America and profited by the economic and political conditions in the relatively open society of the colony. Through their reports, democratic ideals were disseminated among the Presbyterian population that remained at home, and the Dissenting constituency became radicalised. At the same time, the traditional hostility

between the Protestant and Catholic tenantry of Ulster intensified, for the Catholics were accustomed to hardship and therefore prepared to outbid the Scots-Irish for farms.

From about 1740 the social environment of Ireland underwent a transformation that reflected the economic growth resulting from the decades of stability that followed the Williamite Wars. Stately manor houses became a feature of the Irish countryside, and handsome, well-built urban centres replaced ramshackle towns and cities. Dublin became a cultural as well as a political capital with impressive public buildings, well laid out streets and squares and imposing mansions. Several hundred Anglo-Irish peers and members of the House of Commons built town houses in the city, its Anglican middle class was dynamic and well-to-do, and theatre and the opera flourished. By the 1760s, pride in the culture they had created in Ireland and economic interests at odds with those of Britain had generated a new spirit of Irish nationalism in subjects whose identity had traditionally been rooted in their English heritage.

The period saw the rise of a 'Patriot party' representing Irish interests in the Irish House of Commons, a combination that found theoretical support for its positions in the writings of two earlier members, Sir William Molyneux and Jonathan Swift. In The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated (1698) Molyneux challenged England's parliamentary enactments against Irish trade and industry by arguing that constitutionally, Ireland was an independent kingdom that shared nothing but a common sovereign with England and that only laws made by the Irish parliament were binding in Ireland. The book was condemned by the English

Commons and burned by the public hangman, but Molyneux's arguments were taken up and elaborated twenty years later by Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin from 1713 to 1745. In the first of his Drapier's Letters (1724) he called on all Irish subjects to join together in boycotting English manufactured goods, and in the fourth he questioned England's right to make laws for Ireland. Echoing Molyneux, he asserted that England should treat Ireland as a separate and autonomous kingdom under the British monarch.

The Patriot movement provoked considerable public interest, but it had little influence on Irish affairs until the American colonists revolted against Britain. Because troops normally stationed in Ireland were sent overseas, the island was threatened with invasion when France entered the war in 1778. At that point the Patriots enlisted an army of civilian volunteers to preserve the nation from a French take-over, and Protestant tenants, shopkeepers and merchants united under the leadership of the Ascendancy nobility and gentry. Nationalist sentiment was so strong that the British government was forced to tolerate the movement and even to supply arms to the members. The civilian army made the Patriot party a political force, and backed by about 100,000 Volunteers, the leaders, Henry Grattan and Henry Flood, pushed a somewhat reluctant Irish parliament into opposing British control of the legislature. In 1782 England granted nominal parliamentary independence to Ireland, a victory that stimulated trade, commerce, and confidence in Ireland's ability to partner England in the British sphere.

Politically, however, the Constitution of 1782 had a limited effect, for parliament was still controlled by Britain and it was still unreformed. The Privy Council could veto Irish legislation and the executive continued to be appointed in London by the government in power. Almost half of the members were nominated by peers, nearly a third by commoners, and the few elected members were put in on a severely limited franchise. The position of the Catholic gentry and middle class improved, but Catholics and Dissenters were still excluded by law from standing for election after those who met the property qualification were given the right to vote in 1793. Moreover, the Anglican middle class that had helped to win the victory was still shut out of the inner circle of political power. In 1798 the issues of Catholic disabilities, parliamentary corruption and agrarian abuse precipitated a rebellion instigated by the United Irishmen, a republican organisation whose leadership was primarily middle-class Anglican and Presbyterian.

The society conducted secret negotiations with the French Directory and were promised military aid, but bad weather prevented the landing of a large French expeditionary force in 1796 and another in 1797. Thereafter the leaders of the United Irishmen could not count on French help, but they decided to act without it. A general insurrection was planned for May 1798, but spies in the organisation informed the authorities of the plan, and the leaders were arrested. As a result the rebellion was partial and disorganised; the only sustained action took place in the south-eastern county of Wexford where the peasants rose in large numbers. But the savage fighting there convinced the British government that a legislative union with Britain was

necessary to maintain imperial control, and negotiations over the terms began. Britain spent over a million pounds in bribes and emoluments to persuade Irish members of parliament to vote for the measure and promised total emancipation, the commutation of tithes and a state provision for the clergy to win the support of the Catholic establishment. These enticements proved decisive, and despite the opposition of many Catholic and Protestant voters and some members of parliament, the body voted itself out of existence in 1800. At that point, Ireland was transformed from a sovereign nation to a province of the United Kingdom.

Owenson embodied the national histories of Ireland and the other colonies she represented in the histories of individuals, a form of representation that Fredric Jameson sees as typical of third-world writing.[7] Owenson's third-world perspective was derived from her position as an Irish subject with roots in the Gaelic community, an identity that gave her a keen sense of the politics of discrimination. Commenting on the gradual development of our present ideas of 'race,' Lynda Boose notes that "[i]f race originates as a category that hierarchically privileges a ruling status and makes the Other(s) inferior, then for the English the group that was first to be shunted into this discursive derogation and thereafter invoked as almost a paradigm of inferiority was not the black 'race'- - - but the Irish 'race' " Boose also observes that even after the ascription of race by skin colour had been "fixed in concrete" in the early nineteenth century, the English distanced the Irish through the "the terminology of primate behaviour," which was also used to disparage the Africans.[8]

The English construction of the Irish as the subhuman counterparts of blacks and other non-Caucasian peoples was produced in a sociological narrative composed by Giraldus Cambrensis, the primary historian of the Anglo-Norman invasion, and extended in sequels through the centuries of English rule.[9] When the Norman-Welsh priest came to Ireland as tutor and secretary to Prince John in 1185, he recorded his impressions of the country in Topographia Hibernica, which he introduced to England at a public reading in Oxford in 1187. The dissertation contains detailed descriptions of the geography and topography of the island and contrasts its natural beauty and wealth with the primitive condition of its inhabitants:

> The Irish are a rude people subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts. . . . They neither employ themselves in the manufacture of flax and wool, or in any kind of trade or mechanical art; but abandoning themselves to idleness, and immersed in sloth, their greatest delight is to be exempt from toil, their richest possession the enjoyment of liberty. The people, then, is truly barbarous, being not only barbarous in their dress, but suffering their hair and beards (barbis) to grow enormously in an uncouth manner. . . . They are given to treachery more than any other nation, and never keep the faith they have pledged. . . . This race is inconstant, changeable, wily and cunning. It is an unstable race, stable only in its instability, faithful only in its unfaithfulness.[10]

Although the Irish had been Christian since the fifth century, Cambrensis derogates their religious practices as well as their manners and character. He notes disapprovingly that the Irish Church does not conform to the Roman liturgy and that many customs are only nominally Christian. He purports to be shocked by the moral tone of the Gaelic community, citing the informality of sexual relationships and marriage practices which violated Roman ecclesiastical law. On the basis of such differences he concludes that the Irish are "a. . . filthy race, a race sunk in vice, a race more ignorant than all others of the first principles of the faith."[11]

Cambrensis' portrait of the Irish provided a rationale for the Norman invasion and also for England's re-invasion in the sixteenth century, when cultural differences were once again exaggerated in a way that gave the aggressors a monopoly on morality and civilisation. What Nicholas Canny calls an "outpouring of justifications for colonization and conquest" began about 1565 with writers such as Edmund Campion and Richard Stanyhurst, who embellished the image created by Cambrensis.[12] Their line of propaganda culminated in the treatises of Edmund Spenser, the undertaker of the Munster plantation, and Sir John Davies, another talented poet and Attorney-General of Ireland from 1606-15. Echoing Cambrensis, Spenser declared that the Irish claim to be Christian, but they are "so blindly and brutishly informed for the most part as that you would rather think them atheists or infidels."[13] Adding to the chorus of abuse, Davies wrote that they are "littel better than Cannibals who do hunt one another."[14] Both authorities follow the customary practice of prefixing "Irish" with "meere" or "wilde," adjectives used synonymously to brutify and belittle the natives.

The Old English were described in much the same terms by the new wave of colonists, who claimed that the descendants of the Normans were contaminated by intermarriage with the clans and that their assimilation to the native language, customs and manners was a symptom of racial degeneracy. The argument justified the accession of English-born civil servants to positions of power in the country by representing the Gaelic community as a racial pollutant.[15]

The Irish reputation for savagery was enhanced in the next generation when the production of anti-Irish propaganda came under state control during the Cromwellian conquest and settlement. To justify Cromwell's slaughter of Irish subjects and the expropriation of their land to repay parliamentary supporters in the Civil War, the authorities commissioned grossly exaggerated reports of the wholesale massacre of Protestant colonists in the 1641 uprising. When the Act of Settlement aiming to displace Catholic landowners was being drafted, the support of the English public was secured by lurid accounts of settlers' children spitted on long knives and adults crucified or burned alive outside their homesteads. These images were also inscribed in Sir John Temple's History of the Irish Rebellion (1646), which remained a standard source on the period for over a century. Ned Lebow notes that the book was an "immediate sensation," and that Temple's statements inflamed a public that received them with "complete credulity."[16]

With the consolidation of English power by the end of the seventeenth century both native and naturalised Irish subjects became objects of ridicule in England. The basic stereotype of the wild Irishman was decentred by a range of stock figures that

appeared routinely in drama and literature both vulgar and polite. These included stereotypes of peasants, lawyers, military men, priests and squires, all of whom were portrayed as intellectually, morally and socially contemptible in one way or another. Meanwhile, the spectre of Irish barbarity survived, and the image was reanimated shortly before the Union to justify the atrocities of British militia and yeomen after the insurrection in 1798.[17]

The narrative of England's original colonial encounter was the master text of an overseas enterprise that began in the sixteenth century and developed at an unprecedented rate during the French Revolutionary wars.[18] In constructing an Other that justified the exploitation of land and resources and various forms of slavery, the discursive production of Irish identity had already provided a model for colonial discourses of Native America and the West Indies[19] and by 1800, a repetition of the formula was underwriting Britain's transition from a trading nation to an imperial authority in the East.[20] The subversion of this technology of power was the focus of Owenson's efforts to oppose a trend that was also manifested in the loss of Irish sovereignty and the government's failure to put through Emancipation, a measure that she saw as an essential prerequisite to an Irish resurgence.

To undermine a discourse that seemed both authoritative and venerable, she drew on an unusual combination of educational and social experience. She wrote from a liminal space between cultures and classes, a position resulting from a family background that epitomised the collective Irish experience of immigration, emigration, ethnic blending, apostasy and loss of caste. On her father's side she was descended

from the Croftons, a prominent West Country family that settled in Connacht during the time of Elizabeth and intermarried with the Gaelic aristocracy. Her paternal grandmother, Sydney Crofton Bell, was disowned when she eloped with a 'mere' Irish farmer, Walter MacOwen, the offspring of a 'degenerate' branch of the native gentry. They had one child, Robert, a fluent Gaelic speaker with an exceptional singing voice and a native knowledge of Irish music and lore. When he was about seventeen, Robert was taken to London by a local landowner whose estate had allegedly once belonged to the MacOwens. In England he Anglicised his name, renounced Catholicism for the Church of England, became a professional actor, and eloped with Jane Hill, a mercantile middle-class Methodist woman from Shropshire. In 1776 Owenson returned to Dublin, where he became a celebrity for his performance of Irish character roles and his children, Sydney and Olivia, attended a Huguenot academy patronised by the Ascendancy elite. Due to government intervention, he lost most of his money in a theatre that provided a forum for Irish nationalists, and his social and financial position gradually deteriorated. In c. 1798, Sydney took a job as a governess and turned to writing as a means of reestablishing her family. Together with the knowledge of Gaelic tradition acquired from her father her formal education, sophisticated urban environment, and private consumption of the classics of British and Continental literature prepared her for a project that involved an appropriation of the dominant European literary and philosophical discourses and the adaptation of native cultural traditions and earlier post-colonial responses to hegemonic accounts of British and European history.[21]

A key element of her response to Anglocentric history and ethnography was a representational scheme that challenged the paradigm of Otherness constructed by Cambrensis and his literary heirs. It was based on the relatively new concept of the nation as an organic entity with unique characteristics that differentiated it from other such entities and endowed it with a 'natural' right to an autonomous existence. The concept is materialised in the novels under discussion by an exceptional woman who defines national values and commands the respect and veneration of all who meet her, including the agents and representatives of imperialist systems. Her superiority is a function of a history, habitat and cultural traditions that are verified by various types of documentary evidence, yet carefully selected and represented to appeal to contemporary notions of virtue, creativity, taste and authenticity.

Owenson's discursive construction of this new image of 'third world' identity is best exemplified in St. Clair and The Wild Irish Girl, the two novels of Ireland published in 1802 and 1806. Both draw on a scholarly tradition evolved by native and naturalised Irish historians in response to English aggression and the derogatory English images of Irish society. It originated in the early seventeenth century with the work of scholars such as Philip O'Sullivan Beare, an exile and naval officer in Spain, and Geoffrey Keating, a Munster-born priest of Old English extraction. Both men were propagandists who attacked the Cambrensis tradition of history writing and deployed alternative points of view, Beare in Latin and Keating in Irish. Keating, who was more influential than O'Sullivan Beare, composed the first national history of Ireland written in the native language from bardic accounts of Irish origins and

struggles against foreign invaders. In Foras feasa ar Érinn ("A basis of knowledge about Ireland") he claimed that pre-Christian Ireland was a literate, military civilisation ruled by the Clana Míldh (Milesians or Gaelic Irish) whose ancestors had migrated to Ireland via Spain from the Middle East and later spread to England and Scotland. He attributed the loss of Milesian power to luxury and vice, construed it as temporary, and predicted that the Elizabethan conquerors would eventually be overcome like the Scandinavian invaders of an earlier era.[22]

The Catholic attack on the Cambrensis-Spenser tradition was abetted by an influential dissertation by James Ussher, the Anglican archbishop of Armagh. Although Ussher was strongly anti-Catholic, in A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and Scottish (1622) he argued that Ireland was an international centre of Christian learning and piety several centuries prior to the Norman invasion. After the breakup of the Roman Empire, the Irish preserved learning and Christianity at a time when both were almost lost in Europe. Together with Keating's history and works such as Roderick O'Flaherty's Ogygia, which traced the ruling Stuart family back to Irish monarchs, A Discourse helped to stimulate a wave of enthusiasm for Celtic antiquity that affected both the British Isles and Continental Europe in the next century.[23] Irish scholars and antiquarians both Protestant and Catholic participated importantly in the Celtic Revival by collecting and studying Gaelic legal, sociological and historical manuscripts, poetry, folklore, costumes, armour and architectural ruins. Using this research, they built on the work of Keating and his contemporaries to crystallise an image of Ireland as a land of saints and scholars, warlike but chivalrous

Celtic heroes, inspired poets and artists, and spirited clansmen devoted to their leaders. According to the historical script they developed, at an early stage in the history of the West, the Phoenician influence and natural advantages of climate and geography produced a chivalric military civilisation advanced in commerce, agriculture, scholarship and the arts. The singular people who evolved this society not only resisted conquest by the Romans but also exported their culture to Britain and the Continent through trade and settlement. Thus, they influenced the English language and British and European civilisation at a time when England was still a primitive country. Later in the century, the native and naturalised historians Charles O'Connor, Sylvester O'Halloran and Charles Vallencey assimilated this high civilisation to the Enlightenment by representing it as a scientifically oriented society advanced in government and jurisprudence. They offered it as a model for a new Ireland, which, integrating the traditional and the modern on a higher level, would again become an agent of world progress. In a revival of the Gaelic 'golden age,' they argued, religious differences would be resolved by national pride in a common British ancestry, and Ireland would partner, or even lead, her natural ally England in a new civilising mission.[24]

Owenson novelised specific details of this narrative in her Irish fiction and promoted its programme of historically-based social regeneration in all of the settings she represented. But in contrast to the professional historians of the Gaelic revival she did not advance the antiquarian image of pre-Norman Ireland as a model for Irish renewal. Herself an Anglophone hybrid born into a society that was deeply fissured

by racial and religious differences, she saw the destiny of Ireland as inevitably multi-cultural and racial syncretism as an inescapable and often valuable feature of all post-colonial societies. Following the popular historians of her country, the bards who constructed the Aisling tradition, she turned to the fifteenth century for a utopian moment of national history. In the intermarriage of the Gaelic and Norman aristocracy, Norman acculturation to Gaelic manners and mores, Old English Home Rule and the Irish literary renaissance, she found a pattern for a heterogeneous yet integrated Irish nation, connected to Britain yet culturally distinct and domestically independent from the richer, more powerful island.

Her reinvention of Ireland relied not only on native history and folk traditions but also on the critical theory and imaginative literature of Sensibility or Sentiment. The terms are the rubrics of a discourse rooted in the sensationalist psychology of John Locke, which grounded identity in sense experience mediated by the nervous system. On the basis of Lockean ontology, the culture of Sensibility placed a high moral and intellectual value on acuteness of perception, sensitivity to external stimuli, and intensity of feeling, a taxonomy that was innately counter-institutional because it elevated natural attributes over lineage, wealth and other criteria that privileged the British and European oligarchy.[25] Embodied in literature both imaginative and documentary, the Sentimental paradigm of subjectivity helped to underwrite the middle-class struggle for reform in the eighteenth century, legitimating programmes such as the abolition of patronage, the professionalisation of institutions and female emancipation. Women signified importantly in the literature, where a figure of

Woman as a domestic saint who preserved and transmitted bourgeois values was constructed as a symbol of aspiring middle-class consciousness and authentic British and European metropolitan culture.[26] Owenson appropriated the figure, fused it with the Sovereign Woman of troubadour tradition and ethnicized the composite with the Celtic harp and other cultural symbols, thereby creating a personification of alterity that embodied the glamour of the aristocracy, the values of the middle class and the allure of the exotic.

To aestheticize and dignify the Irish social and geographic environment, normally described as savage and primitive by the Elizabethan colonisers and their successors, Owenson took advantage of a paradigm shift arising from the intersection of Lockean epistemology and Boileau's 1674 translation of On the Sublime, a treatise attributed to Longinus, a colonial subject of the third-century Roman Empire. The work defines the sublime as the quality that engenders the greatest works of poetry and prose and locates this quality in passion, inspiration, and majestic features of the natural world. Influenced by Longinus' thesis and vocabulary, writers such as Lord Shaftesbury, Edward Young and Edmund Burke recategorised topographical features that were vast, misproportioned, terrifying, and by traditional standards, barbarous. Blending the Christian belief that geographical irregularities were caused by the Fall with the Longinian view of nature, they redefined such phenomena as 'sublime' in their ability to evoke the awe and terror that men had once felt for God. Their views precipitated a revolution in taste that created a vogue for wild mountainous landscapes, tumultuous seascapes and ancient ruins, all features of the Irish environment.[27]

Together with a cultural upgrading of the status of Nature arising from Newton's demonstrations of the workings of natural law, the discourse of the sublime inspired a reevaluation of primitivity by writers such as Rousseau, who construed man in a state of uncultivated nature as morally and physically superior to individuals corrupted by civilisation. The culture of such individuals was also reassessed by critical theorists who elevated forms of music and language associated with primitive societies over the sophisticated forms evolved by complex civilisations. An alternative taxonomy of linguistic and artistic genres was produced in texts such as John Dennis' The Advancement and Reformation of Poetry (1701), Thomas Blackwell's Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (1735), Bishop Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (1753), John Brown's A Dissertation on the Rise. . . and Corruption of Poetry and Music (1763) and Hugh Blair's Lectures in Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783). Beginning with the premise that the expression of strong emotion is the essential characteristic of sublimity, these authors privileged the lyric over other verse forms and the emotive language of Sentiment over the rational, analytical language of standard prose. They also contended that music is the most emotionally expressive of all the arts and thus has an aesthetic value equivalent to poetry, an argument that revised a taxonomy that had traditionally ranked music below poetry and painting. They further argued that genius is an inborn trait that functions independently of education and training and that works of genius are spontaneously produced rather than artfully contrived. The theory gave rise to the idea that some primitive artists had and have qualities in common with literary icons such as Shakespeare and Spenser.[28]

Sentimental ideas on language, arts and creativity gave a new historical and aesthetic authority to the oral traditions of the European folk, including the Celtic communities in the United Kingdom.

To readers in the the second half of the eighteenth century the postulates of Sentimental primitivism were brilliantly supported by the poetry of the bard Ossian, the creation of James Macpherson, a Scottish Highlander. In 1760 he published Fragments of ancient poetry collected in the Highlands and claimed that the work and its sequels, Fingal (1762) and Temora (1763), were translations of third-century epics and lyrics composed by Ossian, a blind warrior bard, to celebrate the battles of his father Fingal, King of the Highland realm of Morven. They created a literary sensation in Britain and the Continent and sparked a debate over their authenticity that captured public interest for almost half a century.[29] Celtic antiquarians, who pointed out that the bard Oisin and his father Finn McCool were important figures in ancient Irish lore and literature, claimed the poems were forgeries; but the Scottish academy supported Macpherson, who argued that Ossianic poetry was exported from Scotland to Ireland and that his 'translations' were authentic historical narratives. Eventually the controversy ranged Hugh Blair (Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University) and other prominent participants in the Scottish Enlightenment against Samuel Johnson and various Irish and Welsh antiquarians. In contrast to Blair and the Scottish academy, who called them the supreme achievement of an ancient vernacular literature, Johnson scoffed at the epics and denied the existence of any oral or written literary tradition in Gaelic Scotland. The Irish

response is summed up in Ferdinando Warner's Remarks on the History of Fingal and Other Poems of Ossian (1762), which argues that Macpherson displaced Irish heroes to Scotland and conflated stories from the first-century Ulster or Red Branch cycle of heroic literature with characters and episodes from the third-century Fenian or Leinster-Munster cycle. Forceful attacks on Macpherson's 'Forgeries, Omissions and Misplacings' were also launched by Charles O'Connor in the appendix to his Dissertations on the History of Ireland (1766).[30]

The controversy was partially resolved after Macpherson's death in 1796 when the Highland Society of Scotland appointed a committee to investigate the issue of authenticity. Under the direction of Henry Mackenzie, the committee's chairman, the members set about collecting materials and testimonies on the Gaelic literary tradition in Scotland and the status of Macpherson's productions, known collectively as Ossian. In 1805, after seven years of fact finding, the commission published The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland. The commission found that Fingal and Temora are not translations of epics composed by a blind bard called Ossian in third century Scotland, but it also claimed the author had a primary resource in the form of a rich Gaelic ballad tradition native to the Highlands. Its report laid the issue to rest essentially unresolved because the task of translating and editing the putative sources of Macpherson's work was beyond the capacity of the contemporary scholarly community. The question of Ossian's literary provenance was not definitively settled until 1952 when Derek Thomson published The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian. The study proves that Macpherson had grounds for his mistaken conviction

that the Ossianic cycle was a Scottish invention and shows that parts of Ossian were derived from indigenous ballads dating from the Middle Ages.[31]

At any rate, the authenticity of the verse was not the most important issue for most of the contemporary reading public, whose response was stimulated by Macpherson's ability to speak to the concerns and tastes of a civilisation in the process of a revolutionary transition. In a recent essay on Ossian's reception, John Dwyer notes that the warriors of Morven embody masculine courage, fortitude and active patriotism with feminised manners and sensibility. Thus, characterisation in the poetry fused "the best qualities of the past and present" by reconciling the eighteenth century's Stoic concept of virtue with the new emphasis on sensitivity, sympathy, affection and personal relationships.[32] The poems also appealed to contemporary sensibility in their portrayal of untamed landscapes and ghostly apparitions, their melancholic tone and an innovative free verse style that aimed to convey the impression of passionate, spontaneous poetic utterance. Macpherson's blend of sensibility, sublimity, and primitivism created a literature that played a seminal role in the development of the Romantic movement and inspired an international vogue for Ossian that lasted well into the next century. Jefferson, Napoleon, and other national leaders were enthusiasts of the Scottish bard, and creative artists such as Blake, Coleridge, Byron, and Goethe were influenced by his themes and style. In her important critical treatise De la Littérature (1800), Germaine de Staël described Ossian as the progenitor of the literary tradition of Northern Europe;. Gibbon praised him in his history; Girodet, Ingres and many other artists produced paintings on Ossianic

themes; and musicians and poets composed numerous operatic and metrical versions of the verse.[33]

During the last decade, critics such as Fiona Stafford, John V. Price, Richard Sher and Uwe Böker have focused their attention on the political implications of the Ossian phenomenon. Böker notes that the Union of Scotland and England in 1707 put the national identity of Scotland at risk, and the Scottish intellectual establishment became intent on finding an enlightened, cosmopolitan but truly national poet to represent and preserve a culture threatened by the process of modernisation and the totalizing power of English civilisation.[34] In 1759 the playwright John Home met Macpherson, a Gaelic speaker who had received a modern education in the humanities at the progressive University of Aberdeen but nevertheless remained passionately attached to the native culture of the Highlands. While working as a schoolmaster in the remote Northern community of Ruthven, Macpherson had collected Gaelic poetry, which Home encouraged him to translate. Because Macpherson assumed that the contents of his collection were corruptions of an ancient oral tradition of Ossianic poetry that had deteriorated in the process of transmission, he felt justified in blending his sources together and developing a style and a voice that reflected current theories about the nature and origins of primitive poetry.[35] Home was delighted with Macpherson's first 'translation' and showed it to Hugh Blair, who was convinced that it marked the discovery of a literary tradition that rivalled that of classical Greece and Rome. Richard Sher argues that the publications which followed were "practically commissioned" by Blair and the Scottish intellectual establishment, who wanted a

polished work of epic poetry that would counter the strong English prejudice against the Scots and challenge English assumptions of literary supremacy.[36]

Macpherson's work was an inspiration to Owenson, for it showed the way for an Irish literary initiative at a time when the country was experiencing a transition similar to that of post-Culloden Scotland. Obviously guided by his example, she designed an image of contemporary Celtic ethnicity that dovetailed with the Sentimental paradigm of primitivity. By culling and blending appropriate features of national landscapes and cultural traditions, she portrayed Celtic peripheries as repositories of heroic virtue, original genius, the natural sublime and the origins of Western culture. Like Macpherson's mythical Morven, the construct reconciled art and nature in an image of national community that influenced fashion, politics and literature in the nineteenth century.

The affective power of Owenson's text derives in no small measure from her ability to manipulate and subvert the tropes, imagery and modes of the language of racial difference that recorded the official history of European overseas expansion and global domination. From the beginning of the voyages of discovery that began in the fifteenth century, the encounter with previously unknown parts of the world was figured in travel narratives and tales as an encounter between a European male and an aboriginal female, characteristically described in language that construed "discovery" as the ocular penetration of a woman's private parts- - - her hidden "chamber"- - - and the discoverer/narrator as a spy, uncovering and reporting back on what had been previously hidden from the inquisitive European eye.[37] Owenson uses the scheme in a

way that evokes the impression of erotic fascination with unfamiliar cultures that informs the European literature of discovery and colonization, yet represents the 'pornographic' object of investigation/desire as dynamic, noble and incorruptible. Typically, she renders the colonial encounter in scenes that position the symbol of alterity as the unconsciously exhibitionistic object of a modern explorer/reporter's scrutiny, then plots a history of 'colonization' in which the object of surveillance becomes the agent of a subjective transformation that assimilates the spectator to the culture he has come to probe and assess. The strategy foregrounds the relations of power and desire in a way that subverts the economy of voyeurism which structures the Eurocentric discourse of the Other.[38]

Owenson's fictive histories of colonial encounter are embodied in allegories that not only personify national histories but also reenact myths of female power and specific episodes of colonial resistance to foreign domination. She develops the allegories and allegorical episodes in narratives that use the themes and conventions of romance to create exotic 'third world' habitats and characters, and the subjects and conventions of travel narratives and official histories and biographies to authenticate them. Her manipulation of modes and genres that were deeply implicated in the production of Eurocentrism was instrumental in deconstructing the allegorical master code of imperialist narrative, which positioned the coloniser as the superordinate and the colonised as the subordinate term in a binary antithesis.[39]

As well as fabricating an attractive image of Ireland and other colonies conventionally represented in third-world terms, Owenson promoted reforms that

would strengthen them internally. She was a partisan of the Whigs, a position that accommodated a typically Irish allegiance to aristocracy with a commitment to the democratic ideals of the American and French Revolutions. She advocated the reform of the patronage system that gave the British oligarchy a monopoly on public office, government contracts and influential posts in the military, the Church of England, the judiciary and the government bureaucracy, but she considered the traditional social hierarchy a natural order and believed that positive change must come from the upper ranks of society. Her writing reflects the contradictions of the Whig's classical humanist concept of liberty, which combined a desire to rectify social and political injustice with a deep distrust of revolutionary class politics in a domestic situation.[40]

The most conservative aspect of her thinking was her position on agrarian reform, a pressing issue throughout the United Kingdom but more acute in Ireland than elsewhere. The English landholding system introduced after the Elizabethan conquest might have improved the situation of the Irish rural masses, but it lacked the best features of the system as it was practised in England, particularly before the Industrial Revolution. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most of the natives were reduced to small renters or leaseholders, many on estates owned by families who lived abroad. They were ruthlessly exploited for short-term gains to the proprietors and their agents, and they had no incentive or assistance to farm efficiently or make improvements. With the growth in population and the land enclosures in the eighteenth century rents became exorbitant and farming practices destructive and inefficient. Plots were repeatedly subdivided and consistently overworked, and leases

were renewed at inflated prices. In many areas the absence of a resident gentry left local administration in the hands of the tithe collectors and middlemen, a class with no tradition of civic responsibility or public leadership. Many were self-made men who had clawed their way up from the ranks of the peasantry, and they tended to be ruthless and unscrupulous in their exercise of authority. The domestic problems caused by the selfishness and irresponsibility of the absentees were compounded by the effect on the Irish economy. Vast sums in rents went to England every year from a nation that was short of capital for the development of trade, industry and such essential public works as the modernisation of the primitive Irish transportation system and the reclamation of marshlands which substantially limited the amount of land available for cultivation.[41]

Many of these problems are addressed in Owenson's third novel, The Wild Irish Girl, and the issue of absenteeism also figures in her second novel, The Novice of Saint Dominick, which is set in France. Her development of the theme in the Irish novel locates her in a tradition that began with Swift, who attacked absenteeism and other practices of Irish landlords in a number of his works. In his first Irish pamphlet, A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture in Clothes and Furniture of Houses etc., utterly renouncing everything wearable that comes from England (1720), he accused Ireland's ruling class, of "screwing and racking all over the kingdom" and thereby reducing "the miserable people to a worse condition than the peasants in France, or the vassals in Germany and Poland"[42] The accusation was reiterated in the

last of his Drapier's Letters and very successfully novelised in Maria Edgeworth Castle Rackrent (1800) at the end of the century.

Like Swift's pamphlets and Edgeworth's novels, The Wild Irish Girl and the Irish fiction Owenson published after her marriage were designed to reform rather than overturn the status quo. She sympathised with Wolfe Tone and the peasants, who saw the Cromwellian and Williamite landlords as parasites maintained by high rents, low wages and the backing of a foreign power, but she was not a revolutionary republican or a Jacobite. Like other Anglo-Irish Protestants and many in the Catholic middle and upper classes, she despised James II and deplored the national commitment to the Stuart cause during the Glorious Revolution. She wanted Catholics to have the same rights as Protestants, but she considered the restoration of Jacobite land titles a dead issue, and she did not advocate any systemic changes to the dispensation of land or the system of land tenure. Her critique of the landlords encompassed the old ruling class as well as the new, and she held the losers partly responsible for their own decline. Her Irish protagonists are exemplary, but they have been disentitled through the greed, intransigence and mismanagement of their relatives as well as by the settlements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What Owenson advocated was a modern version of the Hibernicized Old English polity, a country led by a nationalist aristocracy who shared power with native chiefs, lived among their tenantry, and according to Irish folk tradition, ensured the general well-being through the practice of a benevolent paternalism.

If Owenson's programme of agrarian reform was fundamentally conservative, her views on religion, ethics, and the status of women were radical in the post-Revolutionary decade. Like many other liberals of her class and generation, her opinions were shaped by the materialist discourses of the Enlightenment, and in contrast to most, she did not repudiate their precepts in the aftermath of the French and Irish revolutions. In her practice of fiction, she employed French Enlightenment attacks on bigotry, despotism and unreason in order to promote sentiments and habits of thought that would facilitate improvements in the status of women, Ireland, and the professional middle class.

Her attempt to popularise the moral and epistemological precepts of the philosophes required boldness and ingenuity on her part, for the French Revolution and the war with France that began in 1793 had precipitated a foreign and domestic crisis that reversed the liberalising tendencies of pre-Revolutionary British society. Naval mutinies, public demonstrations and food riots in England and rebellion in Ireland testified to the spread of revolutionary sentiments and seemed to many to presage a British version of French Revolutionary anarchy. Fear of internal disintegration through regional, class, and religious conflicts was conjoined with fear of conquest by France under Bonaparte, whose rise was viewed with alarm by English observers. The educated classes became generally mistrustful of 'innovation' or 'French principles', terms designating any type of reform, and a previously unprecedented hostility to French culture was widespread. It seemed to many, including former liberals, that the attempt to overthrow patronage, paternalism, social

hierarchy based on inherited wealth and rank, the sexual double standard, and the established Church had precipitated the collapse of civilisation in France and threatened Britain with the same fate. Together with a programme of government censorship and intimidation instituted in response to the foreign and domestic situation, the fear of anarchy and mob rule had virtually silenced the advocates of reform at the beginning of the new century.[43]

Antagonism to the mentality, discourses and philosophers of the French Enlightenment was most forcefully and influentially expressed by the Evangelical movement, a Protestant fundamentalist revival begun by John Wesley in 1738 as a movement to reform the Church of England. In its first phase the movement had little support outside the working class, but it made rapid gains in the 1790s because anarchy in France was widely attributed to the skepticism and atheism of the French Enlightenment. By 1800, Evangelicalism had supporters in every class in British society, powerful adherents in Parliament, and a network of missionary organisations intent on spreading its narrowly Protestant and English world view around the globe. Although leading members of the fundamentalist crusade shared Owenson's opposition to the practices of the British oligarchy, she used her fiction to discredit their religious philosophy, a practice motivated in part by her active commitment to the passage of Catholic Emancipation. Wesley, who had previously been indecisive in his attitude to Catholic disabilities, had made his position clear in a letter to the Public Advertizer that appeared in January 1780, in which he declared that "no government, not Roman Catholic, ought to tolerate the Roman Catholic persuasion." His opinion

was strongly supported by Hannah More, Zachary Macaulay, Thomas Gisborne and William Wilberforce, the lay leaders of the powerful middle-class wing of the Protestant revival.[44]

To combat the ideology of the Evangelical movement, Owenson popularised the secular ethics of D'Holbach and Helvétius, who attacked the concept of Divine Revelation and separated morality from Christian doctrine in their writings. To market their philosophy to a readership that was influenced at all levels by Evangelicalism, she appropriated Voltaire's critique of Catholicism, a strategy that seemingly endorsed the anti-Catholic sentiment of the religious revival. But the tactic was subversive, for by dramatising the social and subjective ills created by zealotry in Catholic frames of reference, she created an acceptable context to condemn it in principle. In effect, she exploited England's ingrained anti-Catholic bias to promote the ending of discrimination against British Catholics.

Her fiction represents the secular enlightenment of the political nation as the foundation of social reform, and considerable space is given over to the issue. Three of the five novels (those not set in Ireland) dwell on the invidious effects of parochial education, and all of them popularise William Godwin's views on education and social change. In the essays collected in The Enquirer, Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature (1797), Godwin argued that social reform is contingent, not on collective political action, but rather on training that promotes civility, the free exercise of private judgment, and the reading of canonical works of literature. The intellectual improvement of an individual affects those around him, and in this way,

whole societies are gradually transformed.[45] Owenson thematizes his educational agenda in plots that represent gradual change through education of opinion as the dynamic of legitimate progress.

As a minority nationalist and a feminist, Owenson's relationship to the Enlightenment was ambivalent, but the contradictions inherent in her support of its principles and productions are the result of inconsistencies in the discourses that comprise its episteme. Her belief in a universal standard of values based on Western concepts of reason and justice is at odds with her commitment to pluralism, but the same contradiction is evident in the writing of Montesquieu and Voltaire, the source of many of her ideas on culture and society. Montesquieu believed that religion, law and other social institutions are sui generis functions of climate and geography, yet he evaluated systems of law in terms of Eurocentric principles of justice and conduct. Similarly, Voltaire's internationalism and his ridicule of patriotism were logically incompatible with his conviction that English government and French culture were superior to other versions. The relativism of Voltaire and other Enlightenment philosophers was also qualified by their enthusiasm for classical Greece and their contempt for the culture of the Middle Ages, biases that are reflected in Owenson's fiction.

The same type of inconsistency is evident in Herder's post-Enlightenment Outlines of a History of the Philosophy of Man (1784-1791), which powerfully influenced Owenson's representation of alterity. The work combines teleological and progressivist notions based on humanist ideals of liberty and social improvement with

a defence of cultures uninformed by such ideals: India and China, for example. Herder claimed that a legitimate national identity is rooted in a distinctive folk culture and that any community possessing such a heritage is 'naturally' entitled to political autonomy. At the same time, he believed that the oral traditions of the folk were a stage in an evolution to a humanistic, international literature, an assumption that privileged European high culture over the bardic culture he elevated in his text.[46] His attempt to reconcile national and international values provided a method for Owenson's cultural work, which exposed the fault lines in his discourse long before it was used to underwrite extreme nationalist and racist doctrines in Nazi Germany. By the 1830s, her attempt to promote humanist concepts of justice and liberty by romanticising the folk had helped to engender a populist Irish nationalism that was fundamentally incompatible with her own aristocratic Whig liberalism.

If the Enlightenment's attitude to culture and society was contradictory, its attitude to women was no less so. Enlightenment representational schemes associated women with disease, unreason and instability, the various discourses of reason were considered male intellectual property, and Rousseau and some other important participants were more or less opposed to the notion of equal rights for women.[47] On the other hand, the philosophes' intellectual interest in the human passions and the principles of social organization gave rise to a critique that provided explicit support for opposition to the subjugation of women by law and convention. For example, in his Essai sur le caractère, les moeurs et l'esprit des femmes dans les differents siècles (1772), Antoine-Leonard Thomas claimed that women "in the temperate latitudes. . .

have not been deprived of their liberty; but a severe legislation has at all times kept them in a state of dependence. . . . [E]ven in countries where they may be deemed most happy, [they are] constrained in their desires, in the disposal of their goods, robbed of freedom of will by the laws, the slaves of opinion, which rules them with absolute sway, and construes the slightest appearance into guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges who are at once their tyrants and their seducers, and who, after having prepared their faults, punish any lapse with dishonour- - - nay, usurp the right of degrading them on suspicion;. . . [such] is the lot of women over the whole earth."[48] Similar views were articulated by d'Holbach, d'Alembert, and Diderot, and in the next generation by Condorcet, who argued that women should be eligible for elective office in Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité (1790). In preparing le Rapport sur l'organisation générale de l'education publique, presented to the French Legislative Assembly in April 1792, he composed a memorandum, "Nature et objet de l'instruction publique," in which he declared that women have the same right to public instruction as men. This conviction was not reflected in the programme of national education introduced to the Assembly, but the literary if not the political evidence indicates that one tendency of Enlightenment thought was towards a greater equality of the sexes.[49] This tendency was manifested socially in the salon culture of the movement, in which Owenson found a model for female participation in national public life. Like the author herself, her heroines are talented and accomplished female intellectuals who achieve social and political influence by organising gatherings of artists and intelligentsia in spaces that are both public and private.

Scots Enlightenment ethical theories and programmes of social reform also provided support for feminism, for they were based on Sentimental views of the importance of feeling and imagination, traits gendered feminine in eighteenth-century faculty psychology. Works such as David Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751), Adam Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) and Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) investigated the emotional springs of moral action and emphasised the connection between sentiment, sympathy, ethics and social stability.[50] Together with the arguments of the French writers who supported improvements in women's social and legal status the Scottish discourse was appropriated by women writers who promoted a view of sexual relationships based on intellectual compatibility, affection, and increasingly integrated social roles for men and women. They developed a tradition of feminist writing that began with Mary Astell's Serious Proposal to the Ladies (1694) and achieved its most forceful expression in Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792).

In the century that separated Astell's and Wollstonecraft's publications, writers such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the anonymous and pseudonymous authors of Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696) and 'Sophia's' Woman Not Inferior to Man (1739) contended that intellectually there is no innate difference between male and female and that women therefore have the same potential for learning as men. Female inferiority, they maintained, was the result of an education in useless accomplishments that made women appear unfit for responsible positions and did not

even prepare them for marriage to sensible men. The argument was novelised by Jane Barker, Sarah Fielding, Elizabeth Inchbald and other eighteenth-century authors and recapitulated in Owenson's fiction. All of her novels emphasise the private and public benefits of educating women in the classics and the liberal arts, the disciplines necessary for entrance into the professions in her day.[51]

Like other aspects of her polemic, the development of this theme was problematic, for the feminism engendered by French and English women in the early years of the Revolution was one of the casualties of the Jacobin takeover in France and the conservative backlash in England. Displays of female learning, traditionally the butt of censure and satire, became more than ever regarded as 'unfeminine' and 'unnatural,' and opposition to the laws and traditions that subordinated women was widely perceived as immoral and subversive. The public was particularly antagonistic to a radical strain of feminism introduced at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Eliza Haywood and Delarivière Manley and developed in the 1790s by Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays. This aspect of feminist protest focused on the ideology of femininity that represented female sexual desire as a perversion of nature, denied women's right to choice in love and marriage, and severely punished sexual transgressions tolerated in men. Hays' Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796) and The Victim of Prejudice (1799) challenged the equation of female virtue with female chastity and criticised the patriarchal institutions that made women victims of male promiscuity and hypocrisy. In her unfinished novel Maria: or The Wrongs of Women (1798) Mary Wollstonecraft launched an even stronger attack on the ideology of

natural female chastity and defended women's moral right to act on their own desires in defiance of the laws and conventions governing courtship and marriage. Wollstonecraft condemned the false sensibility that encouraged the suppression of natural instincts and defended women's natural feeling, which was traditionally constructed in negative terms. Female desire is transformed in her text from a cause of personal degradation and social disruption to an agent of female liberation and social improvement.[52] The post-Revolutionary social climate dictated a cautious approach to issues of sex and gender, but Owenson attempted to make Revolutionary feminism's radical positions viable in a conservative society. If her heroines are conventionally chaste and maternal, they are also unconventionally active, independent and desiring women who have semi-public roles in the national life of Ireland and other colonies.

The chapters that follow this overview of Sydney Owenson's background, themes and textual practices address her first five novels sequentially as social documents that both reflect and respond to her positioning in history and culture. Produced by a subject who straddled the boundaries of most of the categories that constitute social identity, they have all the earmarks of hybridity. Owenson is typical of postcolonial writers in her emphasis on the unique characteristics of regional cultures, her use of native popular and literary traditions to counter official narratives of racial conquest and inferiority, her conflation of gender and imperial relationships, and her contestatory rather than filiative reproduction of official stereotypes, canonical genres and rhetorical modes.[53] These topics are foregrounded in my analysis of the novels, which aims to illustrate the ingenuity that empowered them politically and

won the author a reputation for genius in the period when the novel attained literary status.

Notes

1. Joseph Leerson, "On the Edge of Europe: Ireland in Search of Oriental Roots, 1650-1850," Comparative Criticism, 8 (1986), 91-112.

2. Except for India, the sites that Owenson represents are 'internal colonies.' The term was coined by Michael Hechter, who claims that the formation of modern states often creates regional inequalities within their territorial boundaries. In many cases, the inequalities are based on observable cultural differences in areas forcibly annexed by superordinate groups. 'Internal colonies' are characterized by dependent economies, exploitation by the core society, and populations that generally have subordinate positions in the class hierarchy. Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1975), pp. 8-10.

3. The overview is derived from J. C. Beckett, The Anglo-Irish Tradition (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976); J. C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland 1801-1923 (London: Faber and Faber, 1966); Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland, 6th edn. (1936; London: Meuthen, 1978); Stephen Gwynn, The History of Ireland (London: Macmillan; Dublin: Talbot Press, 1923); and Sean Cronin, Irish Nationalism: A History of its Roots and Ideology (Dublin: The Academy Press, 1980).

4. J. C. Beckett, The Anglo-Irish Tradition, p. 24.

5. Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland, p. 136.

6. Ibid., p. 131.

7. Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Social Text, 15 (Fall 1986), p. 69.

8. " 'The Getting of a Lawful Race': Racial discourse in early modern England and the unrepresentable black woman," Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 36-37.

9. See W. R. Jones, "Giraldus Redivivus- - - English Historians, Irish Apologists, and the Works of Gerald of Wales," Eire-Ireland, 9, 3 (Autumn 1973): 3-20; Ned Lebow, "British Historians and Irish History," Eire-Ireland, 8, 4 (Winter 1973): 3-38.

10. The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis, ed. and trans. Thomas White (London, 1913), pp. 124-136.

11. Ibid., pp. 134-135.

12. "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," William and Mary Quarterly, 30 (1973), p. 576; Ned Lebow, "British Historians and Irish History," pp. 12-14.

13. A View of the Present State of Ireland , ed. W. L. Renwich (1596; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 84.

14. "A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Brought under Obedience of the Crown of England," Historical Tracts by Sir John Davies (1612;

London, 1789). Quoted in Nicholas Canny, "Ideology of English Colonization," p. 587.

15. Nicholas P. Canny, Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800 (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 36-38.

16. "British Historians and Irish History," p. 21.

17. D. W. Hayton, "From Barbarian to Burlesque: English Images of the Irish c. 1660-1750," Irish Economic and Social History, 15 (1988), pp. 13-18. See also J. O. Bartley, "The Development of a Stock Character, 1: The Stage Irishman to 1800," Modern Language Review, 37 (1942): 438-47.

18. Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 7.

19. Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization," pp. 595-98.

20. Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 79-82.

21. The standard biographies of Lady Morgan are Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence, 2 vols., ed. H. Hepworth Dixon and Geraldine Jewsbury (London: W. H. Allen, 1862; rpt. A M S Press, 1975), hereafter referred to as Memoirs; Lionel Stevenson, The Wild Irish Girl: The Life of Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan (1936; New York, Russell and Russell,1969). See also Mary Campbell, Lady Morgan: The Life and Times of Sydney Owenson (London: Pandora, 1988). Lady Morgan's date of birth has never been confirmed. Lionel Stevenson believed she was born in 1776, but Ann Jones thinks 1780-82 is more likely. Her

estimate is based on correspondence that suggests the author left school c. 1796 when she was about 16. These letters are in the Memoirs, 1.123-153.

22. Nicholas P. Canny, "The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature," Past and Present, 95 (May 1982), pp. 100-101. O'Sullivan Beare, an expert in Irish ecclesiastical history, published his complimentary history of the Irish, Historiae catholicae Iberniae compendium, in 1621. He followed up with Zoliomastix ("A Whip for Detractors"), written between 1624-26. The latter work, parts of it still unpublished, is a refutation of Cambrensis and his modern disciple Stanyhurst. W. R. Jones, "Giraldus Redivivus," pp. 14-15.

23. Keating's dissertation was completed about 1634 and circulated in manuscript. According to Ian Campbell Ross, "the History. . . received as many as fourteen manuscript translations into English." A printed translation by Dermod O'Connor was published in 1723 under the title General History of Ireland. Ogygia was a Latin work published in London in 1685. It was translated into English by James Hely and published in Dublin in 1793. See Ian Campbell Ross, " 'One of the Principal Nations of Europe': the Representation of Ireland in Sarah Butler's Irish Tales," Eighteenth Century Fiction, 7, 1 (October 1994), pp. 5-6; Jacqueline R. Hill, "Popery and Protestantism, Civil and Religious Liberty: The Disputed Lessons of Irish History 1690-1812," Past and Present, 118 (February 1988), p. 98.

24. John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State (London: Allen and Unwin, 1989), pp. 54-59.

25. Steven D. Cox, "The Stranger Within Thee": Concepts of the Self in Late Eighteenth-Century Literature (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1980), Chapter 2.

26. Gary Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 1-7.

27. M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Norton, 1969), Chapter 4.

28. See M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 102.

29. For a critical biography of Macpherson see Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988). See also Paul J. de Gategno, James Macpherson (Boston: Twayne, 1989).

30. Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage, p. 165.

31. Howard Gaskill, "Introduction," Ossian Revisited, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 4-5.

32. John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage," Ossian Revisited, p. 169.

33. Paul J. deGategno, James Macpherson, Chapter 6.

34. "The Marketing of Macpherson: The International Book Trade and the First Phase of German Ossian Reception," Ossian Revisited, p. 73.

35. Fiona J. Stafford, The Sublime Savage, p. 83.

36. "Percy, Shaw, and the Ferguson 'Cheat': National Prejudice in the Ossian War," Ossian Revisited, p. 239.

37. Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, Othello and bringing to light," Women, "Race," and Writing, pp. 84-90.

38. See Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question. . . ; the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," Screen, 24, 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1983), p. 21.

39. See Stephen Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History," Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 23 (1988): 157-167.

40. See Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 53.

41. S. Cronin, Irish Nationalism, p. 12; E. Curtis, A History of Ireland, pp. 264, 296-98, 306.

42. Historical and Political Tracts- - - Irish, vol. 7 of The Prose works of Jonathan Swift, D.D.,12 vols., Ed.Temple Scott (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), p. 25. Quoted in Cronin, Ibid., p. 14.

43. Gary Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution, pp. 165-171.

44. Quoted in T. H. Hexter, "The Protestant Revival and the Catholic Question," p. 300. Hexter explains that "Evangelicalism" is used to refer both to the reform movement started by Wesley, which included what later became Methodism and Low-Church Anglicanism, and to the Anglican Low Church movement. Here I use the term to include both Methodists and Low-Church Anglicans. See also Gerald Newman, "Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early

Nineteenth Century: Suggestions Toward a General Interpretation," Victorian Studies, 18, 4 (June 1975), pp. 385-393.

45. See Pamela Clemit, "William Godwin," British Reform Writers, 1789-1832, Dictionary of Literary Biography, 158, ed. Gary Kelly and Edd Applegate (Washington and London: Gale Research Inc., 1996), p. 112.

46. See Isaiah Berlin, Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas (London: Hogarth Press, 1976), pp. 186-194. See also See Gene Bluestein, "Herder and Whitman's Nationalism," Journal of the History of Ideas, 23 (Oct.-Dec. 1962), pp. 118-119.

47. Ruth Salvaggio, Enlightened Absence: Neoclassical Configurations of the Feminine (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 11-18.

48. Paris, 1772, pp. 1, 45. Quoted in Arthur M. Wilson, " 'Treated Like Imbecile Children' (Diderot): The Enlightenment and the Status of Women," Woman in the 18th Century and Other Essays, ed. Paul Fritz and Richard Morton (Toronto and Sarasota: Samuel Stevens, Hakkert and Co., 1976), p. 99.

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49. Arthur M. Wilson, ibid., p. 103.

50. John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage: Text and Context in the Poems of Ossian," Ossian Revisited, p. 167.

51. See Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 108-109.

52. Gary Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution, pp. 173-179; Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Woman Novelist, pp. 130-135.

53. See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1-37.

Moments to Remember: Recycling National History in St Clair; or, The Heiress of Desmond

Sydney Owenson's first novel is a story of romantic passion and tragic death in a remote pastoral setting.[1] That the setting is located in Ireland has always seemed more or less coincidental to the author's critics and biographers, who have uniformly agreed with James Newcomer that "[i]n St. Clair, Lady Morgan is not grinding an Irish axe."[2] But the critical consensus that describes the love story as transparent and apolitical is called into question by examples of all of the devices which, according to John Hutchinson, characterise propaganda aimed at animating nationalist sentiment.- These include the use of naming rituals, the rejection of foreign manners and values, the denunciation of political elites and the celebration of distinctive historical and cultural traditions.[3] Owenson's inscription of these devices in St. Clair identify the novel as an early example of the Romantic literature of cultural nationalism.

The action takes place at an unspecified time in the eighteenth century, but the work is clearly a response to the effects of the Union. These were first apparent when the Protestant leadership promptly abandoned Dublin for London, the new centre of national political life, and almost overnight, the prosperous, cosmopolitan Irish capital became a dull provincial city with a stagnant trade. The decline in the country's political status was also signalised by the presence of a large standing army supported by Irish revenue and by the government's refusal to reinstate Habeas Corpus and other

civil rights suspended after the Revolution. The resulting civic demoralisation was intensified by the social and cultural effects of Ireland's full integration into the English capitalist system, which were soon apparent in the collapse of traditional industries, the mass migration of workers to England, and the rapid decline of native culture. When Owenson published St. Clair, the national community was divided and dispirited, Irish revivalist sentiment was virtually extinct, and the country seemed destined for reconstruction in the interests of the English, urban, mercantile society that fuelled British expansion in the nineteenth century.[4]

To reanimate Patriot nationalism and oppose the centrifugal power of English civilisation, Owenson popularised a concept of national identity that evolved with the expansion of vernacular print culture from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The new technology broke down allegiances based on dynastic and religious lines, which frequently included a wide variety of ethnic communities, and replaced them by allegiances to collectivities united by a shared experience of social evolution within a specific, often territorially- bounded habitat. The paradigm shift was consolidated in the eighteenth century by the political science of Montesquieu and Herder and politically articulated in popular resistance to foreign invasion and control, first in Corsica, then in Revolutionary France and in neighbouring states resisting Napoleonic expansion. The change of consciousness that gave people a sense of belonging to a collectivity largely unknown to them was produced in part through the manipulation or invention of cultural symbols and historical traditions.[5] With the

publication of St. Clair, Owenson became one of the first writers to enlist the powerful and relatively new technology of the novel in this cultural work.

The tale is a novel of Sensibility modelled on Rousseau's Julie, ou La Nouvelle Hélöise (1761) and Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774), the most popular and controversial examples of a genre associated with ideological heterodoxy in the post-Revolutionary period.[6] Appropriating the epistolary form and blending the content of the earlier works, the author plots a fatal love affair between Olivia Desmond, an Irish heiress, and St. Clair, an Irish national raised in Switzerland. The correspondence between the protagonists and the hero's letters to a friend in London domesticate the moral sensibility and the landscapes of the earlier works, a strategy that situates Ireland in the category of the sublime. The letters also nationalise the social critique of the German novel, which delineates Werther's destruction by the interlinked systems of patronage and patriarchy. In St. Clair, the destruction of a noble individual by an order controlled by prudent, materialistic, unimaginative men becomes an indictment of the class that, in Owenson's view, was responsible for the loss of Irish independence.

The series of letters is introduced by a preface that establishes the bourgeois perspective of the narrative. It is addressed to readers who can appreciate the plight of a subject whose "[e]xquisite native sensibility. . . subtilised by the refinements of a superior education" instils a "proud consciousness of merit , superior to the fortune of its possessor."[7] The fictive history of this subject is offered as a cautionary tale to warn readers of the dangers of novel reading, but the conventional theme is illustrated by a

narrative that is covertly subversive. What follows the preface is a tale that glamorises social transgression and attributes the fall of independent Ireland to the system that sustained the economic, social and political power of the Ascendancy elite.

The latter theme is introduced in the first line of the novel's first letter, dated Dublin, March 8, 17- - -. "The Minister has at last dismissed me," writes St. Clair to his friend in London. "[T]he disappointment came like a reprieve; you will smile at the seeming paradox, but you will understand me. . . . My nature is restored to its own dignity: I blush to think it could suffer from adventitious circumstances" (1. 13). He goes on to explain that after "hours of tedious attendance and mortification," the appointment he was promised went to the politician's nephew. The letter expresses the combination of humiliation, bitterness and contempt experienced by professional men socialised to principles of independence and meritocracy but frustrated by what Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer call "the patronage-clientage, place-men and freeplunder features of state employment in the eighteenth century."[8]

Letter 2, also addressed to London, develops the character and circumstances of the hero and focuses the text on specifically national issues. St. Clair's father, the heir to an Irish title and estate, was disowned by his family when he renounced Catholicism and eloped with a Protestant after studying Luther and Erasmus. He settled in the country near Geneva where he lived a life of scholarly retirement and raised his son and two daughters on a small private income. A generation later, a cousin in a junior branch of the family converted to the Anglican creed and came into the inheritance forfeited by the exile, who has recently died when the tale begins. Concurrently, the

failure of a venture in which the bulk of his money was invested has left his family in serious financial straits, and St. Clair is now the sole support of his mother and sisters. The father of his London correspondent attempted to get him the post in the Irish ministry, but he is now dependent on his apostate relation, Lord L., to make his way.

The sequence and events of the family history identify it as an allegory of Irish history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a scheme that encodes the novel's only reference to religious conflicts in Ireland. The biography of St. Clair's father portrays the influence of the Reformation on some of the educated Irish, but it also illustrates the success of the Irish Counter Reformation. The convert is disinherited by his family and migrates to the Protestant centre of Geneva because the feudal caste as a whole responded positively to an initiative by Gaelic and Old English clergy trained in France, Spain and other Catholic enclaves in Europe. Their efforts to revitalise Irish Catholicism united the Gaelic and Old English gentry in opposition to English Protestant civilisation and helped create the social cleavage that produced the rebellion of 1641 and the Cromwellian and Williamite Wars.[9] The long-term effects of the schism are illustrated by the marginalisation of St. Clair, an individual programmed by nature, history and education to play a leadership role in Ireland, and by the corruption of Lord L., who was co-opted by a system that rewarded compromise with a stake in the political nation.

The description of the peer and his family delineates and denigrates the character of the Ascendancy elite. St. Clair expresses his disgust for the self-interest of his relative, the triviality of his wife and daughters and the ostentation of their lifestyle,

traits that he represents as typical of fashionable society in Dublin. He accuses the upper classes of aping foreign styles and manners and claims that their slavish conformity to the European fashion system has vitiated integrity, patriotism and cultural distinction in national public life. This theme is further developed in Letter 3, which deplores the lack of national pride in Irish leaders and condemns their indifference to the country's natural resources:

> Nothing, in this country, which peculiarly belongs to it, is prized by its natives; they look with indifference upon the beauty of their native scenes, and talk to you affectedly of the Alps and Appenines. Their mountains, so numerous and so picturesque, and which serve as alembics, where vapours, exhaled by the sun, are condensed into clouds, and send their refreshing dews and fruitful showers to fertilise and enrich their plenteous soil; their lakes, more numerous than in any other country in the world of the the same extent, so important in a commercial view, affording, as many of them do, within a few miles of the sea, a free navigation; their mines, rich in metallic treasures; their quarries of the finest marble; in a word, those gifts on which the well-being of society depends, and which nature here has so bounteously lavished, are not only unappreciated, but almost unknown by name to the inhabitants. (1. 33-34)

Because Irish indifference to national resources includes cultural as well as material assets, other nations reap the harvest of native genius:

> It commands the armies of other countries, and procures conquest and glory to great nations; it takes the lead in the free senate of the freest people of the earth; it enriches the annals of literature, with productions which can only perish with the language in which they are embodied; and is every where acknowledged and every where admired, except on the soil which gave it birth! (1. 35)

These remarks are followed by fulsome praise for the Irish philosopher and scientist Richard Kirwan, a panegyric that suggests the reasons for the steady flow of Irish talent to England during the 1700s:

> while the few strangers who visit this country, however distinguished by rank, by genius, or celebrity, seek out this amiable and distinguished character, to lay the homage of their admiration and their gratitude at his feet, the inhabitants of Dublin are engaged in running after some imposing quack, recommended to their acquaintance by an English lady of fashion, who, though an English lady of fashion in Dublin, may be no lady of fashion at all in London; or, humbly envious of each other's taste, are striving who shall best do the honours by an English actor, or French dancer, or an Italian singer! Shame upon the country which lives insensible to its own glory, and gives its meed of admiration and encouragement to every merit but that which itself produces! (1. 36-37)

Finally, St. Clair invokes patriotic sentiment to justify his attack and ends the letter with the wish that "every Irish heart throbbed with the same pulse of national enthusiasm with which mine now beats (1. 37).

The remark concludes the introductory section of the novel, which insinuates that the loss of Irish sovereignty is the fault of a leadership that has been corrupted by cosmopolitan materialism. Subsequently, a return to the pure springs of national culture is advocated as an antidote to the urban decadence of the capital, a theme introduced in Letter 4 with St. Clair's description of the countryside around Dublin. The nation's reputation as a land of Saints and Scholars is advertised in his account of a local legend of Saint Kevin, a seventh-century monk whom St. Clair compares to Abelard. It is also invoked in a description of the monastery built by Kevin and in a reference to "the remains of seven distinct oratories, or places of worship," known in the Wicklow area as "the 'Seven Churches' " (1. 40). These testaments to Ireland's long and illustrious history as a Christian nation are situated amid the type of sublime landscape that he later encounters in Connacht. Letter 5 describes his removal there after Lord L. hires him to tutor his two younger sons, who together with the rest of the family, soon join their relative at the Castle of L., formerly the home and inheritance of his dead father.

St. Clair calls Connacht "the classic ground of Ireland" because "the character, the manner, the language and the music" of ancient Ireland are preserved "in all their primitive originality" (1. 52). His assertion that "the native Irish" were driven to the region "by political and religious persecution" (1. 53) is an allusion to Cromwell's

transplantation scheme, which divided Ireland into two parts. The remote and undeveloped provinces of Clare and Connacht were reserved for the Catholic gentry, who were given estates in the West in return for lands confiscated and awarded to Cromwellian soldiers and supporters. The forced removal drastically reduced the power of the Gaelic and Old English chiefs but it preserved the Gaelic culture and language from foreign influences well into the nineteenth century. Geographically and culturally, Connacht had much in common with the Scottish Highlands mythologised by Macpherson, and Owenson capitalised on the similarity. Like the kingdom of the fictitious Scottish bard, Connacht is portrayed as the home of a dying race of heroes, a site of Stoic virtue and social affection, and the locus of an authentically national culture.

The personification of "the real Ireland" is Olivia Desmond, the granddaughter of a Connacht proprietor, Sir Patrick Desmond. Owenson's naming forges an historical link between the protagonists and situates them in the Old English tradition of nationalism promoted in her fiction. The original ancestor of the Earls of Desmond, Maurice Fitzgerald, was the chief vassal of Richard de Clare, the leader of the Norman vanguard in Ireland. De Clare's alliance with Dermot MacMurrough and his marriage to the King's daughter Eva began the practice of intermarriage and co-operative action that produced the merger of the two races, a synthesis epitomised by the Desmonds. By the sixteenth century the Desmond line was full of Gaelic blood, thoroughly Hibernicized in its manners and values, and inveterately opposed to English interference in Irish social and political life. The family led a revolt against the

Tudors in 1569-73 and another in 1579-83 which ended in the attainder of the Earl and the confiscation of half a million acres of Desmond land for plantation. Together with the submission of Shane O'Neill twenty years later, the ruin of the Desmonds ended the hegemony of Gaelic culture and the practice of Home Rule in Ireland. The ancient learned and literary caste of jurisprudents and bards was displaced along with their patrons, and a social order that had prevailed for more than two thousand years was supplanted by the English system of law and landholding.[10] In the fall of the House of Desmond, Owenson found an historical precedent for the fall of independent Ireland in 1798-1800, the central theme of her narrative.

The Heiress of Desmond is in Bath with her grandfather when St. Clair arrives on the scene, but her history and character are described by an Irish servant at the Castle of L. She is the namesake and only child of Sir Patrick's daughter, who eloped with her tutor and therefore forfeited her inheritance and her social position. Lacking patronage, her husband remained an insignificant country schoolmaster, and worn out by poverty and regret, she died when her daughter was an adolescent. Young Olivia proved to be a veritable Griselda, working as a teacher to some fashionable young ladies in the morning and nursing her ailing father the rest of the time. Eventually her local reputation as a modern saint and scholar reached the ear of Sir Patrick and a reconciliation occurred. The patriarch made her the mistress of his household, the sole heir of his property, and the beneficiary of "a handsome independence" that enables her to keep her father in comfort. Later, St. Clair learns that the revolution in her status has also benefited the common folk of the area, who revere her for her charity,

learning, and expert knowledge of native culture. She is engaged to Lord L's oldest son, Colonel L., the commander of a regiment presently on the Continent but expected home momentarily. The marriage will rectify her mother's error and fulfil a long-standing ambition of Sir Patrick by allying the two dominant families of the area.

After the transmission of a history that establishes striking personal correspondences between the protagonists, St. Clair reports his discovery of Olivia's private retreat, a picturesque fishing hut on the shores of a wilderness lake near Desmond Abbey, her family's gothic seat. Finally, after a delay contrived to pique the reader's interest in her character, Olivia herself is introduced into the text. She first appears at a local "fête champêtre," a setting calculated to display attributes that depict her as a cultivated child of nature. St. Clair observes that her looks are unconventional: she is "rather bewitching than beautiful," and her appearance "is not of that striking description to fix the gaze of admiring attention amidst the splendour of a ball-room and a crowd of beautiful competitors" (1. 77, 76). Yet, "there is a certain artless poignancy in her air, an original something, which possesses a charm not be defined: it will not strike everyone," writes St. Clair, "but . . . those it does will feel it sensibly" (1. 77). He goes on to describe the singular "grace of sentiment" expressed in her folk dancing and "a wild, native, feminine vivacity in her air and manner" (1. 77-78). From his first sight of Olivia, other women seem "vapid," "trifling" and "inconsequent" (1. 82).

Olivia acquires a voice in the text when St. Clair stumbles upon a rustic schoolhouse during another of his rambles in the wilderness. Peering through a

window he sees the young woman, who is obviously the patroness of the establishment. He watches while she hears the lessons of the peasant children, instructs them in their moral duties, and administers gifts to all, behaviour that demonstrates her innate maternity and the proper exercise of female social authority. When she leaves the reporter contrives an 'accidental' meeting, and a mutual admiration for Ossian establishes a bond between them.

The poetry is located in the Irish tradition on St. Clair's first visit to Desmond Abbey, where he is introduced to Sir Patrick. The Baronet, who is an expert on Gaelic lore, states that every mountain in Connaught is "enriched by a feat of Fingal," and every old woman in Ireland can "recite a poem of his inspired son" (1. 119). Indeed he is an Ossianic figure himself, an aging, ailing but still imposing relic of a heroic age. St. Clair writes that he is "the true type of the old Irish chieftain," a patriarchal leader who entertains lavishly and supports his clan "even to the most remote member who can claim a shadow of affinity to him" (1. 102, 103). Olivia is his agent and handmaiden, but under her direction his household has become prudently regulated and much more genteel, changes that are construed as improvements. She represents the embourgoisement of the feudal aristocracy that Sir Patrick personifies, the indigenous aristocratic character feminised and refined by a humanist education and middle-class values and habits.

St. Clair's introduction to the Abbey begins an exchange of letters that establishes a dialogue between him and Olivia. Like the bulletins to London, the correspondence embodies research, theories and fashions inspired by the eighteenth-

century Gaelic revival to represent Ireland as the cultural rival of metropolitan Europe. Olivia's first letter advertises the appeal of native arts by capitalising on the contemporary taste for ballads, a product of the eighteenth-century theory that the highest poetic and historical values reside in the oral traditions of the European folk and other primitive societies. The centrepiece of the letter is Owenson's original translation of a Gaelic folk song, Emuninch Ecnuic or Ned of the Hills, a novelty so popular with her readers that she published it separately as sheet music in 1804. The song is accompanied by a footnote that gives the popular account of its origins, a device that points to the ballad's status as an historical artifact. The letter stresses the originality, harmony and pathos of Irish music and the lyric potential and inspirational power of the Irish language, conventionally described as barbaric by Anglocentric reporters.

St. Clair backs up Olivia's praise of Irish oral culture in a tribute to her genius as a harp-player and folk singer, an encomium included in a letter to London written during a prolonged visit at the Abbey. He is elevated by her performances and impressed by Sir Patrick's declaration that she is "the only girl in the kingdom who has the courage to oppose national taste to fashionable prejudice" (1. 121). He also reports that he is intrigued and excited by her books on Irish history, which contain accounts of the Celtic golden age. Discoursing enthusiastically to his friend on the character of pre-colonial civilisation, he rings the changes on Irish antiquarian accounts of its government and military organization. He quotes and footnotes O'Halloran to support his claim that the clansmen and their chieftains were a singularly noble race

and buttresses the argument with a list of the ancient names of the country: " ' Inis Alga,' the Noble Island; 'Inis-na-Biagh,' the Island of Kings; 'Inis-na-Maoimh Eire-oghe,' the Unconquered Island; 'Eire Arde,' the Lofty Island" (1. 163). The inscription of the evocative register is followed by the assertion that Ireland's "high civilisation" endured longer than "any other we read of" and that the country's history associates it with other "great empires" (2. 166).

Many of the letters to London focus on the Irish physical environment and strive to fuse Irish culture, society and history into an organic whole. The lyrical renditions of alpine scenery and gothic ruins textualise the themes of Salvator Rosa, whose work dominated the market in landscape painting in the Romantic period. They also link the geography of Ireland and Switzerland, a nation that epitomised political liberty and the natural sublime to Owenson's readers. The literary landscapes culminate in the last letter to London, which describes an epiphany induced by St. Clair's passion for Olivia and the splendour of his surroundings. The panoramic vistas and his reaction to them help to construe the nation as a living personality, a transcendent being that takes the place of conventional concepts of Deity. The impression that the nation is sacrosanct is encouraged by the lack of allusion to the Catholic character of rural Ireland and signalised by Desmond Abbey's evolution into a secular establishment in which patriotism is the highest moral value.

The first phase of the romance ends when Olivia's fiancée arrives at the family seat with his younger brother, Major L. The heir to the L. estate is an impressive man, an influential member of the Irish Senate and the commander of a regiment that has

distinguished itself in action. He is also an amateur of Enlightenment history and philosophy, with an obsessive interest in the works of Voltaire, Boyle, Bolingbroke, and Hume. His brother is a member of his regiment, but his character is much different. A duelist and a libertine, the Major is even more decadent than his father. He and St. Clair are immediately at odds, and their antipathy soon becomes a pronounced hostility.

St. Clair's reaction to the Major's older brother is much more ambivalent, for the Colonel treats him cordially, offers to find him a place in his regiment, and often solicits his company when he rides to Desmond Abbey. The young man responds positively to these gestures and concludes that his cousin is a man of sense and principle. Yet he finds him intellectually pedestrian, and the discrepancy in their positions is a constant source of distress. His jealousy and resentment are particularly keen during his marginal participation in the Colonel's interviews with Olivia, for although the older man's attachment is genuine, it is obvious that he does not share St. Clair's passion for the young woman. She, for her part, is unusually subdued in her fiancé's company, and before long, St. Clair is convinced that the two are basically incompatible.

Their differences of temperament and taste are most apparent in their attitudes to Ireland and its native culture. The Colonel prefers English airs to Irish ballads and Italian vocalists to Olivia, whose voice and style are obviously unappealing to him. Furthermore, he plans to spend part of each year abroad after they are married, a plan that receives no support from his future wife, although her keen sense of decorum

prevents explicit opposition to his opinions and desires. But she finally contradicts him when he praises Samuel Richardson's Clarissa and denounces Werther and La Nouvelle Hélöise. She and St.Clair consider the two latter novels works of genius, and they have played an important role in the consolidation of their friendship. When the Colonel condemns them, Olivia immediately goes on the attack.

The literary debate that follows has political implications, for it points to the connection between moral regulation and the interconnected systems of patriarchy and patronage. Unlike the older English classic, the French and German novels romanticise liaisons which transgress a system of social relations that prevented women and outsiders from realising their emotional, intellectual and social potential. In common with Lovelace, St. Preux and Werther are punished for violating moral codes that sustained the position of the British and European oligarchy, but in contrast to Richardson's diabolical protagonist, they are virtuous individuals whose fate is related to their marginal social status. St. Clair and Olivia's enthusiasm for the Continental novels over the English work expresses Owenson's opposition to a system of social relations that subvented the unreformed establishment and also constitutes a subtle form of opposition to English civilisation.

When the argument ends the Colonel leaves St. Clair alone with Olivia, who analyses the difference between the cousins. Whereas St. Clair is progressive in his thinking, the Colonel "should have been born a hundred years back." Because he is emotionally and imaginatively limited, he is unable to adjust to social change, and his ideas and attitudes are anachronistic and retrograde. She ends her evaluation with a

remark that implies that the love she felt for the Colonel when they became engaged has diminished with maturity. St. Clair is elated, for he interprets her statements (correctly) as an expression of her preference for him. However, she is determined to honour the commitment she made willingly and gladly a few years earlier, and she makes a sincere attempt to regulate her feelings. St. Clair plans to return to Switzerland, but as the wedding day draws closer, he is so distraught that his passion for Olivia is revealed to the Major. The latter's calumnies and a conversation accidentally overheard and misinterpreted convince the Colonel of his cousin's perfidy, and the brothers ambush their relative during his farewell tryst with Olivia in the fishing hut. The colonel challenges him to a duel, St. Clair is mortally wounded, and with Sir Patrick and the Abbey household in mournful attendance, he dies in Olivia's arms. The engagement is broken off, the Colonel goes back to Europe, and Olivia suffers a fatal decline. Her last social act is a performance of a traditional folk song, Sear fuit na Companach ("The Parting of Friends").

In her rendition of the love triangles she found in Werther and La Nouvelle Hélöise, Owenson dramatises the class divisions, aristocratic decadence and dual allegiance that culminated in the 'death' of independent Ireland two years after the insurrection in 1798. The members of the L. family represent the diversity of types in the Ascendancy establishment: venal noblemen, dissipated libertines and virtuous public figures who were committed to Ireland but looked to England for their cultural identity. Although Gaelic Revivalism was a primarily Protestant initiative which emerged concurrently with Ascendancy political nationalism, it had a limited appeal to

the Protestant electorate. Most members of the middle and upper classes, which were strongly influenced by rationalist and neoclassical ideals, were reluctant to identify themselves with a people still controlled by 'priestcraft' and still resentful over their persecution and dispossession. The leading voices in the Patriot movement, Molyneux, Swift, Grattan and Flood, took pride in their English heritage and were not attracted by Gaelic culture. John Hutchinson notes that "behind their campaign for autonomy was a drive for equality, not for distinctiveness. Nationhood for them, moreover, referred not to cultural identity but to citizenship rights."[11]

Their political philosophy is embodied in Colonel L., whose musical tastes and constant returns to the works of Voltaire, Boyle, Bolingbroke and Hume associate him with the cosmopolitan, rationalist conception of the nation that guided the policies of Grattan and Flood. Olivia's change of heart suggests that by the 1790s the parliamentary leaders were outdated in their adherence to the traditional legalistic concept of national identity and mistaken and politically limited by their commitment to external, putatively universalist models of national culture. The specific content of the reading list implies that the apparent impartiality of Enlightenment writers masked a concept of the civilised that justified English control over Irish affairs: Voltaire was an Anglophile, Boyle was an Irish peer who criticised Swift's attacks on English economic policy in Ireland, and Bolingbroke and Hume wrote histories that reinforced the Cambrensian view of the Irish. The Colonel's character and his literary preferences illustrate the ossification of Ascendancy leadership through the failure to

renounce an intellectual tradition that in Owenson's view was an inadequate basis for an authentic nationalist politics.

Whereas the L. family represents the class whose failure to make crucial reforms precipitated the Revolution, their poor relation personifies the class that was courted and used by the elite, yet excluded from the inner circle of power in the country. The narrative construes the marginalisation of the bourgeoisie as fatal to independent Ireland, symbolised by Olivia. The rise in status that culminated in her engagement maps the social and economic growth that began in the 1740s and culminated in legislative independence, the zenith of Ascendancy political nationalism. Her liaison with St. Clair is a metaphor of the partial revolution inspired by progressive young men like Wolfe Tone, who was radicalised when he was thwarted by the patronage system. The duel and the events that precipitate it are an allegory of the rising and the concerted opposition of the Protestant elite, while Olivia's slow decline represents the years between 1798 and and the Union.

The narrative ends with an adaptation of Clarissa Harlowe's posthumous letter, a palinode that reflects Owenson's ambivalence to the Irish revolution of 1798 and to revolutionary politics in general. Signed by Olivia, the retraction condemns her illicit romance with St. Clair and warns others against similar transgressions. Allegorically, the letter is a denunciation of the Irish revolt, yet other elements of the novel justify the radical movement. Plot, characterisation, dialogue and point of view represent St. Clair, the figure of the revolutionaries, as a man whose intellect, sensibility and patriotism elevate him above his rival and destine him for Olivia/Ireland. Their

transgressive relationship is refined by their mutual affinity for the master works of the humanist tradition and spiritualised by a pattern of religious imagery that represents it as a modern example of fin amour. Together with the similarities in their ancestry and lived experience these rhetorical features vindicate the affair/revolution and construe it as the inevitable product of passions implanted by nature and history.

Such contradictions are characteristic of the works that follow St. Clair, and other features of the text recur as well. All of the novels Owenson published between 1802 and 1811 portray the social problems caused by colonisation, dramatise Herder's view that a viable folk tradition is the basis of national identity, and advocate the preservation and renewal of indigenous historical and cultural traditions. Other repetitions are the use of the love triangle and episodes of national history as a basis of political allegory and a pattern of naming that is politically and historically resonant. The novels are also unified by the 'nationalisation' of religious passions in plots that delineate spiritual regeneration through the impact of the creative life force manifested in the physical and cultural habitat of a primordial national community.

Notes

1. The date of the first publication of St. Clair is still at issue. Ann H. Jones, who has assessed the evidence carefully, writes: "According to her Memoirs (1, 205 and 209) it was published in Dublin in 1801, with some success, and this is confirmed by Samuel Hall in his Book of Memories (1871), p. 218- - - though he may merely have been using information from the Memoirs. However, she also wrote in October 1802

that St. Clair would 'be out early next month,' again with Dublin mentioned as the place of publication (Memoirs, 1, 223). Catherine Hamilton, Woman Writers, Their Works and Ways, p. 218, recorded an edition of before 1803, and although Lionel Stevenson (The Wild Irish Girl, p. 317) doubts its authenticity, since no copy exists, correspondence does exist in which the authoress discusses the novel with her friend, Mrs. Lefanu,[sic] who certainly had a copy in January 1803 (Memoirs, I, 230-31)." Ideas and Innovations: Best Sellers of Jane Austen's Age (New York: A M S Press, 1986), n. 19, p. 310.

2. Lady Morgan the Novelist (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), p. 23. See also Ann H. Jones, Ideas and Innovations, pp. 188-89; Lionel Stevenson The Wild Irish Girl, pp. 55-56.

3. See John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, p.16.

4. See Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland, pp. 353-55; John Hutchinson, ibid., pp. 74-75.

5. See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London and New York: Verso, 1983; extended edition, 1991).

6. See J. M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England , 1770-1800 (1932; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), p. 111.

7. Sydney Owenson, St. Clair; or, The Heiress of Desmond, 2 vols., 3rd edn. (London: Stockdale, 1812), I. vi.

8. The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 89.

9. Nicholas Canny, "The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580-1750," Past and Present, 95 (May 1982), p. 95.

10. Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland, pp. 143-145; 193-199.

11. John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, p. 62.

Uniting the Kingdom: Modelling British Reform in The Novice of Saint Dominick

Two years after the publication of St. Clair, Sydney Owenson brought out the first of three novels that displace the divisions and and controversies of wartime Britain to foreign contexts. The Novice of Saint Dominick[1] is a tale of late sixteenth-century France, a nation riven internally and threatened internationally by social tensions similar to those that were currently putting British sovereignty at risk. The novel dramatises these tensions and their resolution under Henry IV, the leader of an 'internal colony' with political, cultural and historical correspondences to Ireland. His rise to power in a forerunner of the French Revolution and his liberal approach to regional, class and religious conflicts are embodied in a narrative that offers France under Henry as a model for Britain in the crisis of the Napoleonic Wars.

The book is part of a long tradition of propaganda that enlisted France's most popular king in support of revolutionary politics and social reform. In the seventeenth century, peasant insurgents in Normandy celebrated him as the champion of the poor; and middle and upper-class revolutionaries in the Fronde, a revolt against the court government controlled by Mazarin, hailed him as an opponent of oppressive state power. In the eighteenth century, the physiocrats invoked his fiscal policies to promote economic reforms, and the philolophes made him a model of enlightened despotism. In the epic Henriäde (1723), a call for social reform through a renewal of absolute monarchy, Voltaire portrays the hero as an autocrat whose policies were

dictated by reason, humanitarianism, and the national interest.[2] All of these images of Henry converge in The Novice, but the strongest influence on the novel was William Godwin's St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (1799). Godwin uses history as an allegory of current events, yet he gives considerable attention to the authenticity of the historical background of his tale, the story of a French nobleman who loses his estate through gambling and becomes an outcaste from society. The main characters are fictitious, but they are based on historical personages, and authentic characters from the period of the French wars of religion appear in the narrative. Owenson adapted the plot of St. Leon, imitated the author's method of fictionalising history, and reinforced his interpretation of the movement that brought Henry to power. Like Godwin, she represents his accession as part of a liberating intellectual revolution similar to the constitutional phase of the French Revolution. She also imitates Godwin in emphasising the influence of education and experience on character and in portraying chivalric values as outmoded in a post-feudal world. However, she feminises Godwin's narrative by replacing his male protagonist with a female central character, and she eliminates most of the gothic elements of the earlier work.[3]

Many of The Novice's political nuances are derived from Henry's status as the only French king born in Occitania, the French territory south of the Loire, also known as the Midi, Languedoc, and sometimes as Provence, one of the departments in the region. Owenson's representation of his reign links Occitania in France to Ireland in Britain, a strategy that exploits cultural correspondences and colonial histories that are similar in outline to suggest Ireland's potential to assist in the reconstruction of

Britain, recently reconstituted as the United Kingdom. Just as pre-colonial Ireland was socially and linguistically distinct from England, the vernacular language and culture of Southern France set it apart from Ile-de-France in the North, and the two societies evolved on different lines. Because the feudal system was never fully implemented in the region, Occitanian cities were more influential than their northern counterparts, and the relationship between Church and State was very different. Whereas the two institutions worked in concert to maintain the feudal hierarchy in Ile-de-France, Southern secular and religious authorities were often in conflict. By the twelfth century, the relatively liberal society of Occitania was a locus of resistance to feudalism and the Roman Church, an opposition manifested in the rise of the troubadour tradition and the rapid spread of the Cathar, or Albigensian, heresy.[4]

The religious and literary movements were similar in their use of the vernacular, their religious nonconformity, their feminist tendencies and their middle-class roots and perspectives. Neither system viewed the female as the agent of the Fall, and women were active participants and partisans in both. Female Cathars had the same status as men, including the right to preach, and women both practised and patronised the gai savoir, the troubadour lyric mode. Similar to the Cathar sectarians, most of the troubadours were of gentry and bourgeois extraction, and some had very humble origins. They were court poets who used the structure of feudalism to portray sexual relations, but their philosophy of love was basically anti-hierarchical, for it contended that nobility is a function of character rather than of birth. Indeed, much of their verse was critical of feudalism and still more hostile to the established church.[5]

Occitanian heterodoxy eventually provoked a reaction from Rome, and in 1209 Pope Urban III proclaimed a crusade against the Albigensians. Although theoretically an attack on religious heresy, the war developed a secular character when Urban enlisted the support of the King of France and his vassals by offering title to any lands seized in return for service. Religious issues then became a pretext for a war of annexation similar to the Cromwellian offensive in Ireland. After several decades of savage combat in which thousands perished and many of the region's great cities were devastated, the South was reduced and politically subordinated to the North. By the end of the thirteenth century, Occitania was an internal colony providing agricultural and other primary products to the expanding Paris-centred state. Like the Gaelic Irish, the natives became objects of contempt to their conquerors through a tradition of literature and history-writing that represented them as a lazy, boastful, intemperate, unreliable and linguistically inferior.

The Capetian colonization of Occitania was assisted by the Dominicans, who were charged with establishing the Inquisition there. Under their aegis the assault on heresy became an attack on the whole Southern way of life: religious texts in the vernacular langue d'oc were proscribed, and conformity to the ritual and doctrines of Roman Catholicism was strongly enforced. When the Church condemned Andreas Cappellanus' Three Books on Love (1174-86) in 1277, the troubadours became another Inquisitorial target. As a result of official attempts to suppress the Southern vernacular, literature in the langue d'oc declined in volume and vitality, but the idioms and techniques of the gai savoir had a lasting effect on European civilisation. By the

end of the thirteenth century the system had already spread to Northern France, Germany and Italy, where it shaped all the subsequent development of the lyric and the prose romance.

That the vernacular literary tradition also survived and influenced Catholicism was partly due to the efforts of seven troubadours of Toulouse. In 1324 they founded a college to propagate the gai savoir and sponsored a competition of original poems on the Virgin for the prize of a golden violet. The Jeux Floraux de Toulouse was a success and the festival became an annual event that helped to make the Virgin a focus of troubadour lyrics in the aftermath of the Crusade. Over time the school and the games lost some of their importance, but they were revived in the sixteenth century by Dame Clemence d'Isaure. Her initiative was symptomatic of the South's tenacious adherence to the regional language and culture, and Occitania was still a cohesive community antagonistic to the North when the Reformation began in France.

In that nation as elsewhere in Europe, the revolt against the Catholic Church was highly politicised, involving dynastic, regional and class as well as doctrinal issues. In contrast to their counterparts in England and parts of Germany, the French kings did not convert to Protestantism and remained allied with the Roman Church. When Calvinism spread from Geneva to France, Francis I (1515-47) proscribed the new faith and his son Henry II actively persecuted it. He was determined to uproot the heresy but foreign wars distracted him, and the Huguenot party became powerful during his reign. Similar to the Cathar sect, the faction drew the majority of its support from the gentry and the bourgeoisie, but entire populations in parts of the South and North-

West converted. When the reform movement evolved into a political and military organisation, members of the Southern aristocracy took over the leadership. Nevertheless, the region was not monolithically Protestant, and Catholicism remained entrenched in some areas, particularly in northern Provence. Thus in terms of religious demographics, Occitania was a microcosm of the nation as a whole, a social configuration that Owenson exploited in her allegory of the national history.[6]

In 1559 Henry II died after a jousting accident, leaving only minor sons to succeed him. The weakening of royal power precipitated a dynastic struggle organised on regional and religious lines for control of the state. The Catholic party was led by the Guises, members of the House of Lorraine, the dominant family in north-eastern France. The Guisards were opposed by a Protestant coalition led by representatives of the Houses of Bourbon-Vendôme and Montmorency, whose domains were located in the central and southern regions of the country. The first of eight civil wars began in 1562 when troops under the Duke de Guise massacred the congregation of a reformed church in Occitania, and the struggle continued intermittently through three decades and the reigns of the last three Valois kings, Francis II (1569-70), Charles IX (1560-74) and Henry III (1574-89). During this period the real ruler of France was their mother, Catherine de Medici. She was an intelligent Italian who practised a Machiavellian politic to preserve the authority of the Crown during a prolonged domestic and international crisis. Although each of the factions officially supported the monarchy, they were both allied with foreign powers eager for control of French territory: the Protestants with England and Germany and the Catholics with Spain.

The struggle was savage even for that period and national life became increasingly anarchic. The countryside was devastated, the highways were infested with robbers, and towns and chateaux were looted and massacred by bands of guerrillas. Atrocities were committed by both sides, but the most infamous episode of religious persecution, summarised in Chapter 2 of The Novice, was orchestrated by the impartial Catherine.

In an effort to neutralise the Guises, the Queen-mother arranged for the marriage of her daughter Margaret to Henry of Navarre, who became the dynastic leader of the Protestants in 1569 after the death of his father, Antoine de Bourbon, and his uncle, the Prince of Condé. Alarmed by the powerful Protestant admiral Coligny's growing influence over the King, Catherine decided to use the nuptials to eliminate him. When Coligny and other Protestant leaders arrived in Paris for the wedding, she ordered his assassination. The attempt failed, and fearing the consequences of an investigation, she persuaded Charles to order a general massacre of the Huguenots. The royalist purge in Paris and the other cities in the kingdom began on the feast of St. Bartholomew, 24 August 1572, and continued for several days. Approximately 10,000 Protestants were slaughtered, including Coligny and most of the upper echelon of his party. Henry of Navarre was spared, but he was forced to forswear Protestantism and detained at court.

The action was partly successful, for the power of the Protestants was substantially reduced and the immediate threat to Catherine was averted. However, the Huguenot organisation survived, and the reform movement took on a republican,

separatist character. A new war broke out, and the ministers, gentry and bourgeois who took over the party after the massacre formed independent republics in the South and West. The Southern federation was designed in a synod at Béarn, the remnant of independent Navarre ruled by Henry, whose kingdom was annexed by Spain during his father's reign. He returned to the South when he escaped from Paris in 1576, renounced Catholicism, and gradually became a prominent figure in the Southern branch of the reform party.

When Charles IX died in 1574 he was succeeded by his brother Henry III, a decadent, ultra-Catholic homosexual. He attempted to create a third party to balance the power of the Guises and Bourbons but instead of enlisting men of talent with influence in the provinces he courted men for their beauty, style and skill in duelling. His conduct disgusted royalists who were uncorrupted by court life and alienated the zealots of the Catholic League, an organization formed in 1585 to resist the opponents of Catholicism and the state centred in Paris. The leader of the League was Henry de Guise, whose popularity with the inhabitants of the capital made him the real power in the city. In an effort to strengthen his position, the King had Guise assassinated, an act that turned the League and the population of Paris against him. In desperation he allied himself with Henry of Navarre, the next in line for the throne, and formally acknowledged him as his successor. At that point many of the Catholic nobility in the centre and south of France declared for Navarre, thereby splitting the Catholic aristocracy on regional lines. They were joined by Protestants of all classes, principles and communities, including the republicans who had repudiated monarchy. However,

the reform movement retained its democratic character, for on his own insistence Henry was elected leader, and the bourgeois element retained control of finance.

In 1589, the year he recognised a Huguenot as his successor, Henry III was assassinated by a fanatical Dominican monk. The League rejected the new King and the final phase of the civil wars began. Henry of Navarre's army was outnumbered by his Spanish-backed opponents, but he was a talented general and won important battles in the North. Yet his victories were not decisive and despite the hardships incurred in a siege, the capital did not surrender. The turning point of the war came in 1594 when Henry decided that Paris was "worth a mass." With the support of moderates in the Huguenot party he converted to Catholicism, a compromise that assured his success. By that point, support for the League meant support for Spanish control of France, and even the most orthodox Catholics could now side with the French candidate. He was crowned at Chartres in February 1594, entered Paris in March, and in September 1595 received absolution from the Pope for his relapse into heresy. Several days later the Duc de Mayenne, Henry de Guise's brother and the new head of the League, made his submission. All the provinces gradually followed Mayenne's lead, and the elected leader of a republican separatist movement became the saviour and renewer of the disintegrating French monarchy.

Henry's first tasks as king were to recover parts of the realm controlled by the League's ally, Philip II, and to put an end to religious conflicts. In 1595 he declared war on Spain and began negotiations with the assemblies of the Protestant churches. 1598 saw the success of both these initiatives when French autonomy was reestablished

by the treaty of Vervins and the Edict of Nantes subdued domestic strife by giving Protestants equality of citizenship and limited freedom of worship. With a measure of stability restored through his vanguardist religious legislation, the King was able to concentrate on economic problems similar to those of post-Union Ireland. Foremost among these was the state of agriculture, for an outmoded system of land management and a primitive transportation system minimised production and created chronic distress in rural populations. The task of reform was delegated to Maximilien de Béthune, a Protestant gentleman who had served in Henry's army during the civil wars and was later made Duc de Sully for his service to king and country. An unsparing worker, capable and honest, he enriched the nation by giving the peasants a remittance of their arrears on taxes, prohibiting the seizure of agricultural instruments, draining marshland and building roads and canals. By 1610 when Henry's reign ended with his assassination, France was the most prosperous and powerful country in Europe.

The internal divisions both regional and national of sixteenth-century France and the movement towards national consensus under Henry are portrayed in The Novice through the interaction of two fictitious Provençal families, the St. Dorvals and the Montargis. They represent the class as well as the religious rivalries that animated the civil wars, for the Catholic St. Dorvals are peers and the Protestant Montargis successful members of the minor aristocracy. The tale adapts the romance journey and the novel of education to depict the social and subjective changes that reconcile the families and prepare their rising generations for responsible participation in the local and national life of a reforming state.

The centre of consciousness in the third person narrative is Imogen de St. Dorval, who begins life as a foundling at the Convent of Saint Dominick. The cloister is located in a forest in the Northern province of Champagne, a League stronghold in the civil war that brought Henry to power. The infant's origins are unknown, but the nuns name her and dedicate her to St. Dominick on the evidence of the small cross suspended from her neck. On one side it is inscribed 'Imogen,' on the other 'St. D.' Because she is educated by a monk and surrounded by women who think her divinely ordained for religious life, the child is preternaturally pious and determined to become a saint. By thirteen she has mastered the rudiments of scholastic philosophy and convinced the rank and file in the convent that she is a second Theresa of Avila (1515-82), a Spanish nun who spearheaded a fundamentalist reform of the monastic system in the Counter Reformation. As a result she is vain and neurotic, tendencies reinforced by the Jesuitical abbess. Because the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation of Avila has gained by its association with Theresa, the abbess is eager to produce a celebrity in her own institution. Therefore she dwells on Imogen's physical and intellectual resemblance to the Spaniard and encourages her pretensions. Although the child's mind is naturally "strong and comprehensive," by the time she is sixteen her upbringing has turned her into "a fanatic."[7]

Imogen has completed her novitiate and the date is set for her formal induction into the order when she receives a temporary assignment on the margins of the convent. The nuns have a newly appointed confessor, Anselm, who is also the agent and spiritual advisor of a pedantic spinster, Lady Magdelaine. A zealous Catholic and

supporter of the League, she has recently inherited the nearby castle of Montmorell and retired there from court to build an abbey and write a history of the Crusades. When she demands an assistant, Anselm delegates Imogen to prevent the appointment of a potential rival, a younger and more attractive monk. But Imogen's scholarship is unequal to the task, so to safeguard his position Anselm is forced to teach her Latin. Thus she is able to read the books of the late lord of Montmorell, a humanist scholar who established an outstanding library in the castle. When she discovers Plutarch, Virgil and the two Plinys she is soon convinced of the error of Christian doctrine. The immediate result of her conversion is a decision to found a religious order that will reform the type of penitential rule instituted by Theresa, but she soon abandons this scheme. Her research on the Crusades and the characters of Magdelaine and Anselm eventually create a distaste for institutional religion of any kind. Nevertheless she is resigned to her future in the Dominican sisterhood until a troubadour who calls himself Orlando arrives one night at Montmorrell.

When he is brought to the study where Magdelaine and Imogen are recapitulating a particularly brutal incident in the Crusades, they are struck by his beauty and his graceful manners. He tells them he was born in Provence, and because he inherited the "genius" of his native country, he can emulate the twelfth-century "bards. . .who diffused the light of poetry and song o'er the wide dominions of France, then in Gothick [sic] darkness." He says he is a three-time winner of "the golden violet at Thoulouse [sic] " a statement footnoted by an explanatory reference about the festival and its support by Clemence d'Isaure. Since his triumph in the games, he has

travelled throughout France purveying his art. Although he claims to be a nameless orphan raised by Augustinian monks, the lascivious Magdelaine is infatuated and takes him on as her secretary.

Imogen and Orlando are immediately attracted, and she has "visions of bliss" (1. 149) when she hears him perform. A courtship begins, but it is abruptly terminated when the jealous Magdelaine locks the troubadour in a tower. His prison is apparently impregnable, but he escapes and disappears. Imogen finds his harp and costume, masters his style of music, and waits for his return. After two years she gives up hope, but she is now convinced she "can never renounce the ties, the affections of humanity; that reason disapproves [she] ever should" (1. 23). The night before she is slated to return to St. Dominick and make her final vows she disguises herself in Orlando's clothing and makes a daring escape from Montmorell.

Imogen is reborn as a troubadour during the siege of Laon in Picardy, a key offensive in Henry's campaign to subdue the League and drive out the Spanish. Her journey begins in the neighbourhood of the conflict, where she is confronted for the first time with the effects of the wars. After adventures that portray the anarchic state of the French countryside in the period, she is captured by a detachment of League soldiers. They think she is a Royalist spy, take her to their camp, and deliver her to their commander, the Count de St. Dorval. Because she is a replica of his dead wife, he immediately realises she is his daughter and publicly acknowledges the relationship. He also gives her letters that provide the background of her life as a foundling. They reveal that St. Dorval, the heir of a powerful Catholic family headquartered in

Provence, eloped with her mother, Julia de Ribemont, an orphaned Huguenot heiress. At the time she met St. Dorval Julia was engaged to his hereditary enemy, the widowed Protestant Baron of Montargis. She did not love the Baron, but she had agreed to marry him to comply with her father's dying request. Both parties to the elopement were disinherited, but St. Dorval had an independent property near Florence where the couple took refuge. When his father died of an illness induced by his rage over the marriage, he returned to France for the funeral, leaving his wife and their infant daughter Imogen in Italy. During his absence, the child was kidnapped and left at the convent. Later, Imogen and the Count discover that the abduction was planned by the elder St. Dorval on his deathbed, executed by his Spanish servant and motivated by his determination to raise his granddaughter in a Catholic environment. His crime resulted in his daughter-in-law's death, his son's incurable depression and his granddaughter's social alienation.

Imogen's reunion with her father and the restitution of her patrimony is followed by a parallel episode that proves her chivalric mettle and reunites her with Orlando. In a skirmish with royal troops shortly after the recognition scene, St. Dorval is wounded and Imogen, still disguised as a man, shields his body with her own. Consequently, she, too, is wounded and taken prisoner again. In the King's camp she is brought before her captor and discovers she is the prisoner of the troubadour, who proves to be the son of St. Dorval's enemy Montargis. Another emotional recognition scene is followed by a second inset narrative, which revises and expands the history of 'Orlando.'

His early years were spent on his family's estate in Provence, where the Durance River separates the seat of the Montargis from the chateau of the St. Dorvals on the opposite bank. His primary education was a system of religious indoctrination inculcated by a Protestant theologian, "a rigid disciple of Luther [who] had borne a conspicuous part in those violent and controversial struggles which so long tore and disgraced the Christian church." Like Imogen's first teacher he inspired his pupil with a fascination for "subtle argumentation, a love for whatever was difficult to be understood, and an ambition to be supposed capable of comprehending what was in itself unintelligible." In his early teens Montargis was "bigoted and pedantic," but when he matured he abandoned his "crude regimen" in disgust. In its place he took up the classical authors, the poets of Renaissance Italy, and the language, literature, and music of Provence. While studying horsemanship and fencing in Toulouse he met Robert Sidney, nephew of Sir Philip Sidney, portrayed by his biographer Fulke Greville as the epitome of Renaissance virtues and accomplishments. Robert had travelled throughout Europe and Montargis had a sense of "conscious inferiority" in the company of the cosmopolitan Englishman and his circle. He went with them to Paris and begged his father for permission to abandon his life of "glorious indolence" for a trip to England. The Baron consented and the young Frenchman was welcomed into the domestic circle at Baynard Castle, where he met Spenser, Shakespeare, and other prominent literary figures of the period. Such company convinced him of "the inconsequence of rank and riches, unaccompanied by virtue, talents or genius," and he spent two years in England studying the liberal arts (2. 159-170).

In 1589 he returned home anxious to join Henry of Navarre, but he was restrained by his family's tradition of loyalty to the House of Valois. However, he refused to fight against the republican leader, for he admired the "heroic virtues" of his character and sympathised with his response to "those injuries which the power and hatred of Catherine had so long heaped on him" (2. 172). His dilemma was resolved when Henry III was murdered and the Baron acknowledged Navarre as the legitimate king of France. Both father and son joined his army and the young man became one of Henry's most outstanding soldiers. During a break in the campaign, he returned to Provence and became reacquainted with the peasants he had played with as a boy. He claims that "France boasted not a bolder or more vigorous race of peasantry" because "the chain which feudal immunity vested in the hands of power sat lightly o'er them" (2. 177). Before returning to the army he forged them into a crack regiment, and when the King needed reinforcements, he disguised himself as a minstrel and set off for Provence to bring his trainees north. To avoid a troop of League soldiers he made a detour and arrived by chance at the castle of Montmorrell. After his escape he rejoined the royal army at the siege of Épernay (1592) where he stopped a musket-ball aimed at the King. When he recovered from the injury, he attended Henry's coronation and accompanied him to Paris. There his father was elevated to a dukedom and he became the new Baron of Montargis.

The long digression stops the forward movement of the story, but it works to counter French prejudice towards the natives of Occitania, to affirm the egalitarian spirit of Southern society, and to show that the author does not support sedition even

in a just cause. Furthermore, it shows that the Reformation did nothing to eradicate what Enlightenment reformers viewed as the prejudice and unreason of Christianity. Owenson points out that in common with Catholic doctrine, Protestant theology is rooted in scholasticism, which she represents in conventional Enlightenment terms as esoteric, mystifying and nonsensical. She also demonstrates aristocratic reform through the example of professional men and establishes differences as well as similarities between the protagonists. At this point, Imogen has partly overcome the handicaps of a marginal upbringing through diligence, ability, courage and luck. But although she has made the most of her opportunities they have been limited by comparison with the Baron's. Despite a comparable lineage, disposition and abilities, then, she is not yet his equal in learning, accomplishments or independent social status.

Her education continues during her detention in the Royalist camp, where she is introduced to the liberal arts through the volumes in Montargis' portable library. The titles comprise a reading list that points to the seminal role of Provençal culture in Western civilisation. A number of the texts are canonical developments of the troubadour tradition and others reflect the importance of women as writers and patrons of literature. The Baron reads and translates Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, and Bandello, identifying the latter's novellas as a primary source of Shakespearean romance. He also owns (anachronistically) a copy of Honoré d'Urfe's Astrea (1607-1627), the earliest example of the roman de longue haleine, a form of prose romance associated with female writing and subjectivity. His comments on the book lead to a discussion of the evolution of romance from a male-oriented to a female-oriented

genre. Both he and Imogen view the medieval tales of legendary heroes as a relatively primitive form of literature and agree that the feminisation of heroic romance through the influence of the troubadours elevated and refined the form.

Naming in The Novice alludes to the literary transition and to some of the themes of the novel. Imogen is the heroine of Shakespeare's Cymbeline, a romance that resembles The Novice in its depiction of lost status, female heroism and bourgeois and aristocratic alliance. The hero's pseudonym also points to the intersection of courtly and heroic romance and to the plot and themes of the novel. 'Orlando' is the Italian form of 'Roland,' the hero's name in the Charlemagne romances reworked during the Renaissance by Ariosto and Boiardo. In Ariosto's epic Orlando Furioso (1532) the Saracens and Christians are at war for possession of Europe, the Saracens besiege Charlemagne in Paris, and Orlando, the emperor's perfect knight, is lured by the beauty of Angelica, daughter of the king of Cathay, to forget his duty and pursue her. 'Orlando' also alludes to Rosalind's lover in As You Like It, another Shakespearian drama featuring a heroine whose masculine courage and resourcefulness are signified by cross-dressing.

During the conversation Montargis draws Imogen's attention to the first French translation of Pliny, explaining that it was made in the fourteenth century by King John II of France and the Duchess of Burgogne, who "was among the earliest revivers of letters at a period of literary darkness" (2. 278). He also points out a volume of poems by Jane of Bourbon, another fourteenth-century writer, patron and scholar. The discussion of her contribution to literature leads to Petrarch and his

passion for Laura, which Montargis describes as "a mere paradox" since she was illiterate. "How," he demands, "could he choose her as mistress of his soul, who was incapable of becoming the companion of his mind?" (2. 285). The question introduces an oration on female education, "which can alone confirm [woman's] empire over the understanding, exalt her influence over the senses, and render the charms of her mind seducing as those of her person" (2. 286). When Imogen suggests that his vision of "female empire" is "Utopian," he cites Aspasia, Leonsium, Pythias and Imogen herself to support his argument. As an exquisitely feminine woman and a Latin scholar, she is a modern demonstration of his thesis. The dialogue invokes the metaphor of 'wit's empire,' a seventeenth-century figure associated with public manifestations of female intelligence, to endorse female participation in intellectual pursuits traditionally gendered masculine.[8] Montargis' insistence on the desirability of women with masculine learning and his recourse to classical Athens for precedents signal the author's opposition to prevailing social norms. The dialogue attacks the idea that the study of Latin and Greek, necessary for entrance into the professions in Owenson's day, is unfeminine and inappropriate for women.

During the time Imogen spends in Montargis' camp a mature love develops between them, but there are serious impediments to their marriage. The history of the previous generation has intensified the traditional hostility between their families and it is certain that neither father will consent. The situation is further complicated by Montargis' recent engagement. To satisfy his father and the King, the Baron has reluctantly consented to a match with an important heiress. The girl's father is one of

the most powerful Protestant nobles in France, and Henry hopes to secure his wavering support through an alliance with Montargis. The conflict of duty and desire climaxes in a scene showing that Imogen has the civic as well as the martial courage praised by classical biographers and historians. When Montargis returns victorious from military combat and proposes an elopement to his "sweet retreat" in the forest of Ardennes, she conquers her own desire and vanquishes her impetuous suitor in the moral combat that follows. Emphasising the importance of self-control and the responsibilities of social position, she refuses to take a step that would compromise them both. The sacrifice of ambition, probity, honour, and filial duty, she argues, would undermine their own characters, break their fathers' hearts, and perpetuate the conflict between their families. "I am no longer an alien," she declares, "unconnected, deserted; the important scene of life is open to me; I have received the part allotted me to perform; and however frail, however weak, the secret movements of my heart, my actions at least shall not sully the dignity of the character I am to sustain. I owe a duty to society which I will not betray." She declares that allowing passion to govern their action would "afford the young, the thoughtless, and the imprudent an example to justify their own improper conduct" (2. 346). Vowing never to marry without the consent of both their fathers, Imogen renounces Montargis, refuses the socially marginal life he offers, and forces him to recognise his personal and civic responsibilities.

The lovers' parting introduces another important character, the Chevalier de Sorville, who like Montargis is loosely based on Sully. Sorville is related to the St.

Dorvals and became the deceased Count's heir after Imogen's parents were disinherited. However, he refused the title and restored the family estates to the lineal heir, thereby forging a friendship that has surmounted religious differences. He is also a friend of Montargis, whom he met at Baynard Castle while travelling through Europe studying prison reform. He was a surrogate father to the young man in England, and he is also a friend of Montargis' biological father, now the Duc de Beauvilliers. The chevalier functions as a mediator between the two houses and in this capacity escorts Imogen from the Royalist camp to the village of Nivemont where her father is convalescing. There the arrival of a letter concerning the submission of the League sparks a debate between the two men. Sorville is a cosmopolitan humanist who defends the policies of the King whereas St. Dorval is parochial in outlook and speaks for conservatives in both camps. Sorville's arguments prevail, for they convince Imogen that the King is a hero whose rational conduct of affairs will rescue France from the anarchy caused by religious fanaticism.

Sorville begins the debate by affirming the movement toward peace and praising Henry's policy of quelling opposition within France by using bribery and conciliation rather than force whenever possible. He argues that all Christian sects are essentially the same and that men who put the national interest above religious allegiances are acting in the true Christian spirit. The Count, in contrast, denounces those who have abandoned religious principles for bribes and invokes his Crusading ancestors as models of correct conduct. Sorville responds with the humanist opinion of the Crusaders, defining them as an "assassinating band, who, under the sanction of

religion, spread horror and desolation through the finest countries of Europe and Asia" (3. 51-52). The assertion is followed up by a summary statement of the deist religious philosophy promoted in Owenson's novels:

> "[T]rue virtue and true religion are confined to no sect, to no party, to no country and to no age. [T]heir influence is universal and impartial, and when unopposed by prejudices, their vital principles are equally to be found in the heart of the catholic and the protestant, the Jew and the musselman, the Christian divine and the Indian brahmin." (3. 51)

Sorville's defence of the King includes an impassioned discourse on patriotism, which he represents as the governing principle of Henry's policy and the agent of "the liberty, the independence, the moral good, and the political safety" of France (3. 44). The digression elevates a sentiment strongly encouraged in men and women in wartime Britain and represents it as the central dynamic of positive political action, a strategy that negotiates a space for female intervention in public discourse and participation in political causes.[9]

The next segment of the novel sends Sorville, St. Dorval and Imogen to Italy, a device that opens up a space to advertise the attractions of the South. The journey takes the trio down the Rhone river, the ancient highway from Lyons in central France to a point near Marseilles on the Mediterranean. Descriptions of the landscape and topography emphasise the antiquity and cultural value of Occitania's distinctive

civilisation by invoking its history of colonisation by the Hellenic Greeks and the Romans. Sketches of the peasants romanticise the rural life of the area, and a discourse on the langue d'oc dignifies the native vernacular. Sorville lectures on its ancient origins, mentions its importance to the romance tradition, comments on its "beauty" and "expression" and assures Imogen that it would be a rewarding study. "When you come to reside in this country," he says, "I shall expect to see you a second Clemence d'Isaure, reviving the spirit of ancient poesy and song, and distributing the golden violet with your own fair hands to the triumphant minstrels" (3. 89).

After a tour that represents the Southern port as the rival of cosmopolitan Paris, they leave Marseille by ship for Genoa and proceed to the site of Imogen's abduction, St. Dorval's villa on the outskirts of Florence. Here, at the fountainhead of the Renaissance, her formal education is completed. Sorville designs the curriculum and imports experts from the city to instruct her in painting, dancing and music. Her creative genius soon makes her "the foundress of a stile [sic] of singing and accompaniment then exclusively her own" (3. 172), a variation of the troubadour system she learned from Montargis. The Chevalier teaches her English and Italian, and soon she is reading Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in the original. She also reads untranslated editions of Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, as well as the courtly love poetry of François de Martini, Rimi de Balleau and Pierre Ronsard. During this time Sorville receives news of Montargis' marriage and Imogen is devastated, for she had not given up hope of an honourable union with the Baron. However, she maintains a facade of cheerfulness for the sake of the other members of

her domestic circle, conduct that contrasts sharply with her father's. Now wholly given over to "the luxury of woe," he is erecting a splendid monument on his wife's grave and slowly dying of melancholy. The narrative voice condemns St. Dorval's self-indulgence and commends Imogen's self-mastery, but at the same time, the novel construes love as a subjective absolute that transcends social imperatives. Imogen complies with the will of patriarchy, but the development of the plot from this point shows the harmful personal and social effects of frustrated passion.

When Imogen's moral character has been sufficiently tempered and her intellectual and artistic talents have been polished to a high gloss, she is ready for a trial in fashionable society. After the Count dies and she becomes the ward and fiancée of Sorville, they set off for the city. Within three weeks, she becomes a Florentine celebrity known as " 'the Muse of the Arno' " for the brilliance of her conversation, her musical talent, her taste in painting and sculpture and her genius for poetic improvisation. Yet the social triumph has adverse effects, for it stimulates her vanity and reactivates the desire for recognition engendered in the convent. Because her passion for Montargis is unsatisfied, she becomes dependent on the attention she receives from her sophisticated admirers, and she is bored and restless when she returns to the villa. Although she has the highest affection and esteem for Sorville, she perceives him as a parent rather than a lover. However, it was the Count's dying wish that his friend and his daughter marry, and Sorville is now in love with her. Thus she has agreed to the match, yet the prospect of a conjugal relationship with the serious and somewhat solemn middle-aged man is unappealing.

Imogen's success in Florence, the most brilliant society in Europe in the period, indicates that she is prepared to penetrate the power centre of her own country. Accordingly, the nineteen-year-old heiress and her entourage set off for Paris, a journey that incorporates another, more extensive, travelogue of Provence. After touring Languedoc, Viverais, Auvergne and Blaisois she arrives in the capital with a cargo of Italian furniture and objets d'art. These treasures are the foundation of her success in the city, where she renovates the gothic mansion she has inherited and becomes an overnight sensation by introducing the neoclassical style to the French court. She becomes a famous salonnière and acquires a reputation as an artistic genius, for the talents that dazzled Florence are even more brilliant in their new setting. The apex of her career as a single woman is a facsimile of a coronation, which occurs when Henry, in recognition of her genius, revokes Salic law and invests her with the family title:

> The court was never more brilliant, never more crouded [sic], than on the festival of St. Denis, the patron saint of Paris, the day on which the countess de St. Dorval, supported by the duchess de Guise and the marchioness de Bellisle, went to kiss the king's hand on her elevation to the dignity and title of her ancestors. Although still in the habit of filial grief, on this occasion she cast her "nighted colour off": the brilliant diadem of peerage for the first time encircled her polished brow, and glittered amidst the luxuriance of her shining tresses; the purple folds of her velvet robe were confined to the symmetry of her arms,

> waist, and bosom with diamond clasps of immense value; and her zone. . . was composed of the most precious gems: never had she before appeared so splendid in her attire, so beautiful in her person, so animated in her air, or so bewitching in her manner. (4. 28)

By the time she reaches Paris Imogen is already Montargis' equal in education and accomplishments, and with her elevation to the peerage she becomes his equal in rank as well. The way is therefore prepared for an an authentic partnership, and he reappears at the ceremony divested of the commitments that were formerly impediments to the union. His father and his wife have recently died, the former of "political spleen" over Henry's policies; the latter giving birth to a sickly child. The young couple's passion for each other is undiminished, but now Sorville stands between them and another moral crisis arises. The King's legal wife, Margaret of Valois, is in exile at Usson, and his mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, is his consort. The King's conduct debases the moral tone of Court society, and many of Imogen's closest associates are libertines. But she is still dangerously naive and does not realise this, nor does she perceive that many of the host of writers and artists whom she supports are specious and venal. In an effort to suppress her feelings for Montargis she embarks upon an orgy of spending and self-display; formerly "a votarist of pleasure," she becomes a "fanatic." She loses large sums at gambling and becomes indiscriminately generous to the parasites who surround her. She also becomes addicted to praise, and even though she is still sexually innocent, she loses all sense of reserve. Because she

admires and supports genius in others, she is blind to the envy elicited by her own performances. She ignores the admonitions of Sorville and becomes peremptory in her dealings with him. Meanwhile, she harasses her agent in Provence with requests for funds which exceed the income of her estate.

Her career as a socialite ends when the fashionable world turns on her after she shocks the spectators of a private ballet she has produced and choreographed. Her performance inspires the rumour that she was St. Dorval's mistress and that her title is illegitimate. Sorville breaks their engagement and disappears, and a courtly admirer attempts to seduce her. At the same time she discovers that none of her tradesmen and suppliers have been paid, so she is responsible for a number of bankruptcies. Her mortification is complete when she is ostracised at a party and her carriage is repossessed as she is driving away. When she is shocked into sobriety by the turn of events, she begins the process of self-redemption. Because Sorville has taught her accounting, she is able to regulate her finances after she fires her dishonest steward. By selling the contents of her household for their original cost to a Jewish usurer who mysteriously appears at her door, she discharges all her debts without mortgaging any of her property, a step she is determined to avoid. After an illness that prostrates her for several weeks, she closes her house and leaves Paris for her Provençal estate where she embarks upon a penitential regime of solitude, frugality and good works. As part of her domestic reform, she readopts her novice's habit, shorn of its religious details.

At the conclusion of Imogen's "worldly novitiate" Owenson brings the three major characters onstage in monastic costumes for symbolic enactments of the

procedures of canonisation and the ritual of profession. When a pair of mendicant friars who appear at the Chateau St. Dorval prove to be Sorville and Montargis, Imogen learns that she has not been abandoned. Sorville, the 'usurer,' acted as Montargis' agent and in a different disguise, attended her sickbed. The two men restored her Paris mansion to its former magnificence then masqueraded as monks for several weeks in the neighbourhood of her estate, where they investigated her activities and reputation. They learned that the penitent has earned an outstanding reputation for her thrift and charity and is widely regarded as a saint in the region. After witnessing her ministrations to a dying peasant woman, they cannot resist "throwing themselves at her feet, and adoring those virtues whose divine exertions they had witnessed" (4. 314).

The unmasking precipitates a secular version of the general confession of sins that precedes the ceremony of profession. Imogen identifies her most grievous faults, extravagance and neglect of social duty, and attributes them to her convent background. At the end of the confession, she signals her submission to "the sacred laws of social happiness" by declaring herself ready to honour her engagement to Sorville. Montargis agrees to stand in for Imogen's father in the marriage ceremony, thereby confirming the authenticity of his own moral reform. After this supreme test of their resolution and social responsibility, Sorville unites the young couple in a facsimile of the symbolic marriage that unites the candidate for religious life to God. Three months later a public ceremony formalises the alliance, which symbolises the end of sectarian conflict and the beginning of a utopian era of "confidence, peace and

affluence. . . on every side" (4. 361). The end of the novel portrays Imogen's triumphant return to Paris for the wedding of Henry and Marie de Medici, an event represented as a reform of court society.

The conjoined vicissitudes, exploits and achievements of Imogen and Orlando/Montargis comprise a symbolic account of key moments in the evolution of France, the most powerful nation in Continental Europe and Britain's rival for global hegemony. The troubadour is the central figure in the scheme, variously representing the political and cultural nation of Occitania, Henry's revolutionary movement, and the gai savoir. The history of 'Orlando' plots the rise and dissemination of the troubadour tradition, its appropriation by Catholicism, and its revival in the sixteenth century. The conquest of Occitania, its colonization by the Dominicans, and its renaissance under Henry is symbolically represented by Imogen's abduction and sequestration in Northern France and her escape from Montmorrell in the guise of a troubadour. The interlocking figures of the convent and the castle are a microcosm of feudal religious and political establishments working in concert to promote superstition, hypocrisy, the oppression of women and the perversion of human love and sympathy. Both institutions exist in a state of privileged isolation from ordinary society, and both are controlled by authorities who are indifferent to the misery of the lower classes, represented in the text by the serfs struggling to survive "famine" and "the horrors of civil war" on "the skirts of the forest of Montmorrell" (1. 218).

Montargis' infiltration of the castle and his seduction of a woman 'engaged' from infancy to the hereditary enemy of Provence is a symbolic drama of Henry's

invasion and conquest of the French heartland. Navarre's takeover was facilitated by the spread of humanism, symbolised in the novel by the protagonists' reeducation in the classics, liberal arts and troubadour tradition. Their mutual increase in autonomy and social power after 1594 personifies the new authority of social outsiders in the order inaugurated by the King's coronation. The rise of Montargis from the ranks of the minor nobility to a dukedom replicates the history of Sully, and Imogen's transitions from social nonentity to League affiliate to the inner circle surrounding the King has an historical parallel in the career of Pierre Jeannin. The son of a tanner from Autun in northern France, he became first an adviser to Mayenne and after the submission of the League, a cabinet minister in Henry's administration. Whereas the Royal Council was formerly dominated by princes and magnates Navarre appointed men on the basis of ability and dedication to the national interest.

Imogen's renovation of her mansion in the capital and her career as a salonnière are other indices of the cultural changes that took place when Henry became king. Her brilliant soirées represent the inception of salon society in early seventeenth-century Paris, and her refurbishing is an allegory of the modernisation and aesthetic improvement of Paris during the same period. Before Henry's assassination the Tuileries was renovated and the Louvre was transformed by the addition of the Grande Galerie, an outstanding example of Renaissance architecture. The crowd of artists in Imogen's house is a synecdoche of the hundreds of artists and craftsmen who lived and worked on the lower floor of the splendid new addition. Just as Imogen supports her protegees, the King supported the executors of his programme of renewal. His public

works and lavish patronage of the arts began the capital's transformation from a medieval city to one of the world's most elegant urban centres.[10]

The composition of the coronation scene and the fictional event it describes symbolise the type of social transitions that took place when a dynasty inaugurated by the abrogation of female rights gave way to Henry's revolutionary order. The first king of the Valois branch of the Capetian line ascended the throne in 1328 when Charles IV died and left only daughters. Backed by an assembly of nobles, Philip of Valois seized power, an act later justified by lawyers who invoked an ancient law of the Salic Franks stating that a woman can have no portion in the inheritance of Salic land. Thereafter this provision of the archaic Salic code was institutionalised to prevent women from succeeding to the throne or transmitting the succession.[11] In the allegorical scheme of the novel, Henry's revocation of the statute and his formal recognition of Imogen's right of inheritance represents the liberalising influence of the Southern ethos on the oppressively patriarchal society of the North. The gendering of the feudalistic ceremony and the auxiliary role of representatives of the principal Northern families symbolise the elevation of women, Southerners, and the bourgeoisie in the reconstituted national community.

The novel dramatises Irish and Occitanian history concomitantly through narrative, descriptive and allegorical writing that emphasises the similarities between the two regions. The travelogues link them through depictions of the monuments, ruins and peasant culture common to both, and descriptive terms in the dialogue establish the similarity of their literary traditions. Allusions to the troubadours as

"bards" point to the common Celtic origins of the Occitanian and Irish vernacular poets and to the historical parallels between them. Both were members of a privileged caste supported by an indigenous aristocracy, both evolved a distinctive form of vernacular literature at an early stage in the formation of modern Europe, and both expressed the racial and historical consciousness of an independent nation. Thus, the artists and their productions were the target of invaders and colonisers, but in both communities they remained a locus of resistance to foreign domination. References to Clemence d'Isaure promote the preservation of such vernacular traditions to provide a focus of resistance to the assimilative power of core cultures like the English Home Counties and Ile-de-France.

The politico-religious factions of Occitania and Ireland are emblematised in the image of the rival houses facing each other across the Durance River. The device constructs them as binary opposites, and plot, characterisation and narration construe the history of the families and constituencies they represent as a dialectical process. It was the fundamental equality of the two families, the narrator declares, that "produced those germs of competitorship which many unavoidable and many adventitious circumstances contributed to mature" (2. 23). The social divisions created by the Reformation intensified an animosity rooted in the distant past, and rival political alliances organised on religious lines intensified their hostility. Finally, personal grudges resulting in part from historical circumstances "completed that structure of discord of which hereditary political and religious hatred had laid the foundation" (2. 24). The older generation of Dorvals and Montargis are honourable men who truly

believe in the rightness of their cause, yet their stories show that unbridled passions and uncompromising loyalty to traditional values and allegiances have a pernicious effect on individual and national destiny. The play of mirror images demonstrates that social stability is contingent upon the reform of education on humanist lines. Through the parallel experiences of two generations of the families, this is construed as the catalyst of social integration in post-Reformation France and the solution to conflicts still unresolved in contemporary Britain.

The novel supports Mary Wollstonecraft's appeal for gender equality in education and public life by illustrating women's courage and stamina, their intellectual and administrative potential, and their ability to influence national society. The contrast between Imogen's rational objectivity and Montargis' rash impetuosity at a critical juncture of national history challenges the assumption that women are inherently more sensual and impulsive than men and therefore more of a threat to civil society. Comparison and contrast link character and behaviour to education and socialisation rather than to male and female 'nature'. Imogen is constructed as a double of Julie de Ribemont, who is linked by her name and history to the heroine of Julie; ou, la nouvelle Hélöise , a contemporary literary stereotype of the sexually transgressive woman. The difference between mother and daughter illustrates the capacity of education to transform female sexuality from a potentially effeminating and disruptive influence to an agent of reformed state power. Through her study of the classics Imogen assimilates an ethical tradition that prevents her from repeating her mother's error and destroying the Baron's usefulness to Henry and France. Her

education also prepares her to act independently in the national interest by giving her the knowledge to manage her inheritance so that it supports the public welfare. Virtually every episode in the novel links the social and intellectual emancipation of women to national unity and progress.

To novelise the themes of A Vindication of the Rights of Women Owenson drew on an earlier attempt to market Revolutionary feminism in the Revolutionary aftermath. She appropriated ideas, content and strategies she found in Mary Hays' Female Biography, a compilation published in 1803. Like Hays, Owenson used the popular forms of biography and autobiography to compose a critique of attitudes and institutions that were historically and currently implicated in the subordination of women. Owenson follows Hays in relating the subjugation of women to the internalisation of false ideology and in illustrating the subversion of female intellect and instincts by patriarchal values and institutions. She also follows Hays in demonstrating that the development of 'mind' in women is perfectly compatible with the conventional female roles of domesticity, the practice of local philanthropy, nursing and the moral education of the young.[12]

To make these arguments Owenson adapted the Life of St. Theresa, a famous example of spiritual autobiography produced in the period dramatised in the novel. Her construction of bildüng draws on Theresa's account of her early desire for sainthood, her conversion to the religious life and the genesis of her career as a monastic reformer. A precocious child who tried to run away to Morocco and become a martyr before she was in her teens, the Saint began her novitiate after the reading of

religious books belonging to an uncle made her terrified of hell. A few years later, meditations on two famous penitents, Magdalene and Augustine, induced raptures that inspired her career as a religious reformer. The Novice incorporates versions of these events and plots Theresa's progress from obscurity to social authority to canonisation, but it substitutes a secular for a religious ethic and reverses her movement out of society into an increasingly austere conventual life. When Theresa's fictional avatar is exposed to the discourses that shaped Navarre's statecraft, she is converted into an opponent of the Counter Reformation and begins a "worldly novitiate" that prepares her to participate in the King's reform of secular society. The text of a heroine of the Counter Reformation, a religious fundamentalist who revitalised an institution that epitomised the subordination of women in patriarchy, thus becomes a vehicle of religious emancipation and feminist critique.

The Mémoires du Duc de Sully (1747) was another important documentary resource in Owenson's attack on religious fundamentalism. The work was a respected and widely-read example of historical autobiography compiled by the Abbé de L'Écluse from Oeconomies Royales, Sully's unedited memoirs and translated into English by Charlotte Lennox in 1755. Écluse preserved Sully's point of view faithfully in most instances, including his conviction that the King's accession was a victory of reason over blind faith and narrow self-interest. His authoritative interpretation of the movement that established the Bourbon monarchy served Owenson's agenda because it challenged Evangelical ideology, which equated the type of rational humanism Sully described with Jacobinism.

Although the novel is part of the post-Revolutionary dis. ourse of radical 1790s feminism, one of its major themes associates Owenson with conservative women writers of the 1800s. The purpose of Imogen's apprenticeship in society is to create a disciplined individual sensitised to upper-class responsibilities and prepared to participate in the practice of a responsible paternalism in the interests of national solidarity. This treatment of bildüng was typical of Jane Austen, Elizabeth Hamilton, Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth, all of whom shared Owenson's concern about the quality of the leadership given by the landed classes of Britain. Similarly to The Novice their fiction aimed to instil into the hegemonic classes a sense of responsibility for the welfare of rural populations depressed by innovations that made landowners rich. Owenson gave the topos a nationalist inflection by drawing attention to absenteeism, a specifically Irish problem that was aggravated in the wake of the Union. The three penultimate episodes of the tale are a call for the country's landowners to act responsibly, stay in the country and stop throwing away money on frippery and self-indulgence.

Imogen's orgy of conspicuous consumption and display links upper-class irresponsibility to the corruption of court culture, an issue of considerable public concern when The Novice was published. Many observers in Britain were dismayed by the example set by the dissolute sons of George III during a period of national emergency and feared the likely possibility of George, Prince of Wales becoming the regent of his mentally unstable father. [13] Owenson addressed the issue by using the example of Henry's court to condemn the extravagance and the sexual conduct of its

modern British counterpart. The Novice depicts the invidious effects of the mistress system and encodes a monitory comment on Prince George's womanising through a cameo of Henriette d'Entragues. She is portrayed as a seductress who insinuates herself with Imogen, manoeuvres against her, and contributes to her temporary loss of prestige. The association of the two women is a symbolic enactment of Henry's liaison with d'Entragues, which began after his marriage to Marie de Medici. The courtesan was repeatedly implicated in plots against the throne contrived by her relatives and their allies among the powerful. The King's involvement with her impaired his judgment, put his future at risk, and damaged his reputation in contemporary political circles.

Although Owenson's use of history, biography and autobiography is ingenious, The Novice is marred by careless writing in the long inset narratives and by inconsistency in the point of view. With an ambivalence reminiscent of Amelia Opie's Adeleine Mowbray (1804), the novel explicitly condemns but tacitly condones extravagant subjectivity and violations of social convention. The ambiguity is pronounced in the delineation of fashionable society, particularly in references to Henry's affair with Gabrielle d'Estrées. At various points in the work their liaison is represented in romantic terms, but it is condemned in the Court sequence. Other flaws are immature attempts at Shakespearean comic scenes, a pedestrian example of Burneyan bluestocking caricature, and language that seems pretentious today. But these faults notwithstanding, for that time the tale was an unusual attempt to render

the authentic data of history dramatically as a form of sociopolitical commentary, and it was well received.

The network of themes and discursive strategies in The Novice of Saint Dominick establishes the author as a participant in the post-Revolutionary tradition of British reform writing. Her feminist critique links imperialism, colonialism, parochialism and the subordination of women and relates them to the keystones of patriarchy: religion and court government. She uses the novel to promote a programme of rational reform based on the theories and intellectual habits of the philosophes and other apostles of reason demonized in the Evangelical propaganda of the day. Her popularisation of Sully's and Godwin's views of the political revolution that established the Bourbon monarchy aimed to recuperate an agenda contaminated by association with the overthrow of the Bourbons in the 1790s. By showing the beneficial effects of a politics based on reason and tolerance in an earlier period of revolutionary crisis in France, The Novice of Saint Dominick worked to sustain the reforming impulse of the philosophes in the increasingly xenophobic, Gallophobic and parochial society of wartime Britain.

Notes

1. The first edition of The Novice is imprinted "1806," but it was out by October 1805. In a letter to Owenson dated 16 October 1805, Richard Phillips says that "Every one speaks highly of the Novice of St. Dominc, [sic] but their praise is

always qualified by the remark that it would have few equals in this line, if it were reduced one entire volume in length. Some copies of the novel have been sent for you to Archer, whom you ought to reprimand for not ordering any copies."

Memoirs,1.225.

2. Mark Greengrass, France in the Age of Henry IV: The Struggle for Stability (London and New York: Longman, 1984), p. xii.

3. See Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 179-236.

4. For a history of regional nationalism in Occitania, see Alphonse V. Roche, Provençal Regionalism: A study of the movement in the Revue félibréene, Le Feu and other Revues of Southern France (New York: A M S, 1954), Chapter 3.

5. On troubadours and the Albigensian Crusade see Jack Lindsay, The Troubadours and Their World of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (London: Muller, 1976), and Meg Bogin, The Female Troubadours (New York: Paddington Press Ltd., 1976), pp. 8-76.

6. For histories of the French wars of religion and Henry's reign, see E. Armstrong, The French Wars of Religion: Their Political Aspects, 2nd. edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1904), and David Buisseret, Henry IV (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

7. Sydney Owenson, The Novice of Saint Dominick, 4 vols.. (London: Richard Phillips, 1806 [1805]), 1. 161.

8. See Jane Spencer, The Rise of the Female Novelist, p. 22.

9. See Ina Ferris, "Writing on the Border: The National Tale, Female Writing, and the Public Sphere." Unpublished paper given at the conference of the North American Society for Studies in Romanticism, August, 1993, London, Ontario. pp. 4-5.

10. See Marshall B. Davidson, The Horizon Concise History of France (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 75-76.

11. Eduard Perroy, The Hundred Years War, trans. W. B. Wells (1945; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), pp. 71-76.

12. See Gary Kelly, Women, Writing and Revolution, pp. 236-246.

13. Gary Kelly, "Eton Stannard Barrett," British Romantic Prose Writers, 1789-1832, First Series, ed. John R. Greensfield, Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 158 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1991), p. 43.

Déjà Vu: Reinventing Ireland in The Wild Irish Girl

The publication of Sydney Owenson's third and most famous novel was an important moment in the evolutionary process of Irish state formation. The catalyst of the work was the author's first direct exposure to English prejudice against Ireland, a product of her first trip to London in 1805. Writing of the experience many years later, she remarked ironically that "[i]t was requisite I should leave my native country to learn the turpitude, degradation, ferocity, and inconsequence of her offspring; the miseries of her present, and the falsity of the recorded splendours of her ancient state."[1] She returned to Ireland with a strong sense of cultural mission and began the research in history and ethnography that culminated in the publication of The Wild Irish Girl: a National Tale in 1806. Although it was successfully aimed at an English audience and established the author internationally as an interpreter of Irish culture, the novel made its strongest and most lasting impression in Ireland. The image of national community crystallised in the text influenced Irish nationalism throughout the nineteenth century and helped to shape the official character of the Irish republic that came into being in the twentieth.

The work was clearly conceived as an assault on the Cambrensian tradition and thus aligns the novelist with historians such as Keating, O'Sullivan Beare, O'Flaherty, Vallencey, and O'Halloran, all of whom supplied ammunition for her attack on the documentaries of Englishmen who had lived or travelled in Ireland since the Norman

Conquest. Owenson countered their Anglocentric narratives with a pseudo-travelogue composed in the form of letters posing as English eye-witness reports of the landscape of Ireland and the character and manners of its inhabitants. She had already experimented with this format in St. Clair, which provided the general plan and method of the new literary project. Both novels incorporate the historiography and ethnography of the first Gaelic revival in letters describing a young man's arrival in eighteenth-century Dublin, his journey to Connacht and his love affair with a woman who personifies authentic Irish culture. However, an important modification of the basic plot gives the new novel a stronger political charge. Whereas St. Clair and Olivia are both Old English Protestants born in Ireland, the heroine of The Wild Irish Girl is a remnant of the country's native Catholic aristocracy and the hero is an absentee descendant of a Cromwellian invader. Consequently, the work addresses racial and religious issues that do not inform St. Clair.

Three preliminary letters written in England establish the background and personality of the narrator and set the plot in motion. Like all those that follow, they are addressed to J.D. Esq. M.P. and signed Horatio M. They reveal that the writer is the younger of the two sons of the Earl of M., a widower of excellent character. The youth was reading the law to prepare for a career in parliament when he was compromised by an affair with a fashionable married woman. His father has extricated him from the scrape but has decided to banish him to the family estate in the west of Ireland for a time. Although he has never set foot in the country, Horatio considers his punishment onerous. In the final introductory letter he describes his "decided

prejudice" against Ireland and laments his exile to England's "wild western territories."[2] The salutations and content of the letters indicate the scope of the novel by identifying its intended audience and illustrating their ingrained cultural biases. The tale is addressed to the rising generation of British leaders and designed to eradicate prejudices that justified Ireland's political and economic subordination in the United Kingdom.

Letter 1 identifies the source of these prejudices as a tradition of reporting exemplified by the testimony of Fynes Moryson, an Elizabethan historian and travel writer who went to Ireland as secretary to Lord Mountjoy, who put down the O'Neill Rebellion. Moryson's history of Mountjoy's campaign and the Itinerary of his travels through Europe and Ireland extended the Cambrensian narrative in their portrayal of the English as civilising heroes and the native Irish as pagan savages. His works were standard authorities on the period and helped to stamp the dichotomy in the minds of future generations of Englishmen, a process illustrated by Horatio's recollections:

> I remember, when I was a boy, meeting somewhere with the quaintly written travels of Moryson through Ireland, and being particularly struck with his assertion, that so late as the days of Elizabeth, an Irish chieftain and his family were frequently seen sitting around their domestic fire in a state of perfect nudity. This singular anecdote (so illustrative of the barbarity of the Irish at a period when civilisation had made such a wonderful progress even in its sister countries), fastened so strongly on my boyish imagination, that whenever the Irish were mentioned in my presence, an Esquimaux group circling round the

> fire which was to dress a dinner, or broil an enemy, was the image which presented itself to my mind; and in this trivial source, I believe, originated that early formed opinion of Irish ferocity, which has since been nurtured into a confirmed prejudice. So true it is, that almost all the erroneous principles which influence our maturer being, are to be traced to some fatal association of ideas received and formed in early life. But whatever may be the cause, I feel the strongest objection to becoming a resident in the remote part of a country which is still shaken by an anarchical spirit; where for a series of ages the olive of peace has not been suffered to shoot forth one sweet blossom of national concord, which the sword of civil dissension has not cropt almost in the germ; and the national character of whose factious sons, as we are still taught to believe, is turbulent, faithless, intemperate, and cruel; formerly destitute of arts, letters, or civilisation, and still but slowly submitting to their salutary and ennobling influence. (1.36-37)

Here in the opening paragraph of the novel, Owenson uses a well-known anecdote from Moryson's Itinerary to undermine his tradition of representation and establish the character of the modern Anglocentric witness who will discredit such accounts.[3] The passage maps the formation of prejudice and establishes the narrator as a hostile yet rational observer. He understands that his distaste for Ireland is the product of childhood exposure to images that are absurd given the island's proximity to England; yet despite his recognition of the fact, the feeling persists and governs his

interpretation of Irish history. His reminiscence demonstrates the affective power of traditional stereotypes and their connection with the plot of English historiography, which is summarised in the last sentence of the letter. It provides a linear account of Ireland's progress from savagery to English civilisation, an historical trajectory invalidated by the plot of the novel. The letters that follow testify to Ireland's long history of civilisation and predict the restoration of native power and cultural institutions in a regenerated national community. Their content is structured on the plot of Irish historiography, a circular pattern that describes the resurgence of Gaelic civilisation after each successive wave of foreign invasion.[4]

The novel's argumentative strategy is established in Letter 2, which describes Horatio's arrival in Dublin. Typically, the narrative introduces English conceptions of Ireland through Horatio's expectations and initial perceptions of the Irish population and environment, then invalidates the stereotypes invoked by the experience he describes. The task of debunking and redefinition begins on board ship with Horatio's first sight of the Irish coast. Because visitors and colonists had traditionally emphasised the country's lack of development to justify English and Scots settlement on Irish land, he was prepared to encounter a "barbarous" landscape. Thus he is pleasantly surprised to find that Dublin Harbour compares favourably with the Bay of Naples, considered the epitome of the picturesque by eighteenth-century tastemakers.

The correspondent's first encounter with the natives is even more surprising although it seems at first to corroborate the reports of his predecessors. Stormy weather prevents the ship from landing, so the bolder passengers go ashore in a

mailboat sent out from port. It is manned by six gigantic Irish rowers whose appearance is ferocious and uncouth. Yet Horatio quickly discovers that these primitive "sea monsters" are cheerful, articulate and polite. Another passenger tells Horatio that these traits are typical of the lower Irish, who are "civil even to adulation" if they are kindly treated, although fierce when abused (1. 40-41). Unexpectedly impressed with what he has so far seen and heard of the country and its inhabitants, the traveller feels "something like pleasurable emotion" when he steps onto Irish soil.

The episode is the first of the novel's many efforts to counter a satirical tradition that began in the seventeenth century when government propaganda in the Cromwellian Wars disparaged the courage, ability and intelligence of the Irish rank and file. The topos was refined in Restoration comedy, and by 1700 obsequiousness, cowardice, absurd racial pride and foolish impudence were traits routinely ascribed to the Irish masses. A related theme of English satire was the innate linguistic incompetence of the 'mere' Irish, a canard introduced c.1680 with the publication of Bog-Witticisms, or Dear Joys' Commonplaces. This was a jestbook that went through many editions in the eighteenth century as The Irish Miscellany. The text ridiculed the Irish accent and idiom and represented the 'bull' (a comic blunder in speech) as a specifically Irish characteristic. By 1700 the term 'Irishism' had been coined as a synonym for 'solecism' and 'Irish' jokes turning on the native use of language abounded. Owenson's multiple references to the courage, courtesy, dignity and

expressiveness of the common people aim to combat the racial prejudice that permeated all forms of English media and the English language itself.[5]

Horatio's initial response to the Irish character and landscape is subsequently reinforced by a layover in the national capital. Having been conditioned to the view that urban Ireland is backward and provincial, he is nonplused by Georgian Dublin and startled by the tone of its society. He enthuses about the neoclassical elegance of the city, and in contrast to St. Clair, emphasises the cultivation and cordiality of the country's social and political leaders. At the end of his letter he writes that his "prejudices have received some mortal strokes" (1. 43), but he concludes that the cosmopolitan environment of the capital does not reflect the authentic character of the country. This he expects to observe when he reaches his destination on the north-west coast of Connacht. Because of the political history of the area, he expects it to retain "the Irish character in all its primeval ferocity" (1.48). Letter 2 begins with his passage into the region, once again established as the geographical and cultural zone of essential Irishness.

The journey to the far west of the island is a reenactment of his ancestor's progress through the country in the previous century and a movement backwards in time from an urban to a preindustrial agrarian world. He leaves the city in a modern carriage, transfers to a stagecoach, and enters into "the classic ground of Ireland" (1. 48) on foot after the coach drops him twenty miles from his destination. Thus his first contacts with the inhabitants of the area controlled by his family are with Irish peasants, who are transformed from degenerate brutes into natural aristocrats in his

reportage. Whereas English observers typically construed the poverty of the Irish working class as evidence of their moral and intellectual degradation, Owenson dwells on the fortitude, sensibility and vital folk culture of a community living in subhuman conditions. Horatio's bulletin to J. D. discredits English accounts of the barbaric manners, rude speech and bestial appearance of the rural workers by representing them as vital, resilient, civil and rich in their orality.

By introducing the issue of absenteeism, the next report to London reconciles Owenson's romantic image of the peasantry with centuries of agrarian violence in Ireland. Letter III begins with Horatio's arrival at M. House, the family headquarters in the country, and describes his first meeting with his father's agent, Clendinning. He writes that since their estates were won in the Civil War by his ancestor General M., his father is the first of the family ever to visit them, and the man who exercises authority on his behalf is cruel and unprincipled. Because he has already formed his own opinion of the peasants, Horatio is disgusted when Clendinning claims they are so lazy, unreliable and rebellious that only "a slave driver" can manage them, and he is shocked by the stories of abuse that he hears from his father's tenants. Summing up his impressions, he writes:

> It is not possible a better defence for the imputed turbulence of the Irish peasantry could be made, than that which lurked in the unprovoked accusations of this narrow-minded sordid steward, who, it is evident, wished to forestall the complaints of those on whom he had exercised the native tyranny of his

> disposition (even according to his own account), by every species of harassing oppression within the compass of his ability. For if power is a dangerous gift even in the regulated mind of elevated rank, what does it become in the delegated authority of ignorance, meanness and illiberality? (1. 96)

In recent years the Earl has made a number of visits to his Irish property, but the victims of his agent tell Horatio they are afraid to complain because he spends only brief interludes in the country. Clearly, if conditions on the estate are to improve, the proprietor must live there himself.

Characterisation in the episode aims to justify peasant hostility to the Scots, a perennial cause of rural conflict in Ulster. Clendinning is represented as an unscrupulous usurper of Irish lands, a portrayal that endorses the native view of the Scottish settler community. He is a recent immigrant who has used sharp practice and his unsupervised control of Lord. M.'s property to acquire native land in his own right. His career is a synecdoche of the Scots migrations to Ireland in the aftermath of the Elizabethan and Cromwellian Wars, when the English government sponsored the plantation of Scottish immigrants on lands confiscated from Gaelic and Old English proprietors.

The events that lead Horatio to the final destination of his journey of discovery begin with a description of M. House, a "bleak and solitary" manor that images the indifference, neglect, and social isolation of the proprietors. When he learns that his

father has another residence, a wilderness lodge he rents from Clendinning, Horatio decides to investigate. Lord M. is a personable man only nineteen years older than he, and Horatio suspects he has an ulterior motive for his annual visits to a country he formerly ignored. He expects to find evidence that the Earl has an Irish mistress, but he finds nothing unusual except for a locked room containing a library of books on the language, history and antiquities of Ireland. However, he hears a story that gives him a new view of his family history and completes the process of cultural orientation that began with his first sight of the island.

The Gaelic caretaker of the lodge tells him that the former owner was the Prince of Inismore, a purebred Milesian chieftain whose family once ruled over vast tracts of land in the Dublin area. In the time of Elizabeth the family was driven into Connacht and soon dominated the entire region around M. House. Fiercely resistant to anglicization, the Inismores reigned supreme in their sphere until Connacht was finally reduced in the Cromwellian Wars. During the conflict General M. battered Inismore Castle to its present ruinous state, slaughtered its proprietor, and as a reward, received most of the Inismore lands. However, the Irish family retained the rich farm surrounding the lodge, which the father of the present Prince built with the dowry of his wife, an heiress descended from the Kings of Connacht. The final ruin of the Inismores was the result of two generations of extravagance and mismanagement, which enabled the opportunist Clendinning to gain title to the property. The family now owns nothing but a few acres of land around the long-deserted and reputedly

haunted castle of Inismore, where the last Prince of the line lives and rules the remnants of his clan.

At the end of his recitation the servant tells Horatio that the Earl of M. has tried to compensate the Prince for his family's dispossession by General M., but his offer to restore the property taken over by his agent was rejected in a note stating that "[t]he son of the son of the son's son of Bryan Prince of Inismore, can receive no favour from the descendant of his ancestor's murderer"(1.122). The pride, intransigence and historical memory expressed in this response, Horatio learns, are characteristic of the Milesian aristocracy, a dying breed who are nevertheless vigorous in their allegiance to traditional values and customs. Because he is the only member of his caste left in the area and he will not consort with people who are less well-born than he, the Prince lives in isolation with his daughter, a woman renowned for her folk singing, her skill as a healer, and her classical scholarship. In his sphere, Inismore preserves the traditions of the Irish aristocracy, keeping permanent open house for his retainers and allowing no one to eat at his table except for his daughter, whose lineage is better than his own.

Horatio is strongly affected by the narrative, an allegory of the decline of the Irish aristocracy and the gradual advance of English civilisation from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Accustomed to revere his forbear's character and exploits, he now feels he has heard his history "for the first time." Pride in his ancestry is replaced by guilt, and he wishes his family "had never possessed an acre of ground" in Ireland, "or possessed it on other terms" (1. 128). Yet his feeling is qualified by

contempt for the Prince's stubborn pride and by his conviction that the Princess must be a bigoted and pretentious hoyden. Like previous generations of English colonists, he rationalises his position in Ireland by denigrating the native proprietors whom he has displaced, yet his curiosity is piqued by the Inismores. The caretaker tells him the Prince will not receive any member of the M. family, but he is not completely inaccessible. He and his daughter attend daily morning and evening services in his chapel, and these are open to the public. Horatio decides to attend vespers that evening and sets off immediately.

Letter V, written from Inismore Castle, relates the events that lead to Horatio's installation in the stronghold of his hereditary enemy. It begins with an aerial view of Inismore's diminutive kingdom, which functions symbolically as a microcosm of pre-Norman Ireland. The rocky two-mile peninsula has been transformed into an island by a man-made chasm; and when Horatio summons the courage to descend to sea-level and cross the primitive bridge that spans the abyss, the physical environment changes. Like Cambrensis, he notes that the climate is milder and the vegetation more luxuriant in the Gaelic realm, but his impression of the peasants does not accord with the report of the Anglo-Norman. He writes that they seem much healthier and more prosperous than any he has seen elsewhere, and he is charmed by their dress. He learns they are wearing their "holiday garb," ethnic costumes which he carefully describes. Further questioning reveals he has arrived in Inismore on the anniversary of General M.'s conquest, an event commemorated annually by a memorial service.

Only moments before Horatio had been startled by the magnitude of the general's achievement in capturing the stronghold. He was so impressed by the boldness of "his daring ancestor," he "almost forgot his crime" (1. 137). Now the consequences of the feat and the coincidence of his arrival at this particular time strike forcibly upon him, and he is briefly overwhelmed by another dislocating shift of perspective. For a moment he shares the Gaelic conviction that the present is haunted by the past and history repeats itself. He almost flees the scene in guilty terror because he feels implicated in the General's deeds. But his normal habit of skepticism almost immediately reasserts itself. He dismisses the incident as an example of the mind's susceptibility to environmental impressions and proceeds with his rustic guides to the fortress which surmounts the cliffs at the western extremity of the peninsula.

Here the heroine of the novel is at last introduced in a theatrical scene in the castle's medieval chapel. It begins with a vivid description of the setting, where the tattered banners of the family are wafted by the wind circulating through the fractured roof, and the rays of the sinking sun shine on the golden tabernacle and the ornate vestments of the two priests positioned at the crumbling altar. The light, the location and the physical character of the chapel symbolise the retreat and decline of the social order incarnated and mythologised in the Kingdom of Inismore.

The Wild Irish Girl enters in a procession headed by the Inismore chaplain, stately in his pontifical robes. He is followed by the Prince, an aging colossus dressed in a long scarlet cloak, fringed, embroidered, and fastened by large golden broach. Around his neck is a heavy golden collar of curious workmanship, and on his head a

velvet cap, richly embroidered. On his arm is Glorvina, Princess of Inismore, "a form so almost impalpably delicate" that she seems like "the incarnation of some pure ethereal spirit" (1. 147). She is costumed in a white robe and a scarlet silk cloak, veiled in point lace, and crowned with a diadem of precious stones which match the jewels in her bracelets and girdle. The exotic pair is followed by the remainder of the household: assorted domestics, an ancient bard, the steward, and Glorvina's nurse, whose bizarre ensemble is also described in detail. The Prince and Princess attempt to position themselves among the other worshippers, but the crowd draws back reverentially; and finally father and daughter stand alone "in the centre of the ruined choir- - - the winds of Heaven playing freely amidst their garments- - - the sun's setting beam enriching their beautiful figures with his orient tints." (1. 152). The positioning of the pair accentuates the figurative meaning of the episode: the Inismore are icons of a culture that is rich, illustrious and poetic in its alterity.

The chapel, the rites, the congregation, and above all the Prince and Princess galvanise Horatio, and he follows the Inismores at a distance when vespers is over. After lingering in a hiding place outside the castle until nightfall, he is about to leave when he hears a woman singing to the accompaniment of a harp. Mesmerised by the beauty of the voice and the melody, he climbs a wall encircling the fortress and looks through an open casement into the room where Glorvina is performing. Suddenly the wall collapses, and he is knocked senseless in his fall. When he regains consciousness he is inside the castle, and the Nurse is setting his broken arm. The Prince is holding

him in his arms, and the Priest is applying a plaster to a head wound. Glorvina, who is visibly distraught, is preparing bandages.

These events revise the history of General's M.s invasion in a way that associates Horatio with the Normans, who made a conquest that elided the categories of victor and vanquished. His reaction to the Inismores replicates the Normans' gradual response to the culture and manners of the Inismore's ancestors, and his accident suggests the terms of their assimilation to native society. Like the original English colonists Horatio is isolated in an attractive but unfamiliar environment, and he is vulnerable to its perils. He soon finds that his survival depends on the guidance, help and good will of every class in the native community.

Symbolically, the episode represents the end of an historical cycle that began with Cromwell's invasion and marks the beginning of a new cycle that will recapitulate the national history of the fifteenth century. In the complex allegorical scheme of Letter V, Horatio's fall and its aftermath represent the death of General M.s avatar and his rebirth as a descendant of the Anglo-Norman invaders. When the intruder comes back to life, he is surrounded by his new family circle. It includes a priest and a nurse, fixtures and intimates in aristocratic native families. The surrogate family witnesses and assists the 'nativity' and will adopt the absentee and educate him for leadership in a modern version of Irish feudal society.

The symbolic significance of the tableau is elucidated by the name Horatio assumes the next morning. In order to conceal his relationship to the Earl of M. he claims to be a travelling artist named Henry Mortimer. The alias associates him with

the Old English by allusions to Henry II and Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore in Herefordshire and one of five absentee heirs to Richard de Clare's fiefdom of Leinster. He arrived in Ireland in 1308 to claim his inheritance of Leix, deposed O'More, who in Irish eyes was king in that part of the West, and thereafter ruled the region from O'More's fortress on the rock of Dunamase. During the wars with the Scottish King Edward Bruce, whose attempt to conquer Ireland was supported by many Gaelic clans, Edward II appointed Mortimer his Lieutenant. Acting on the King's instructions, the royal agent issued an edict admitting the Irish to full use of English law, and took other measures that reconciled the Irish chiefs to Norman rule. A Gaelic tract written during Mortimer's tenure praises "those princely English lords who gave up their foreignness for a pure mind, their harshness for good manners, their stubbornness for mildness and their perverseness for hospitality."[6]

After the overthrow and murder of Edward II, Mortimer ruled England for three years as unofficial consort to Edward's widow, the Queen-mother Isabella. He used his power to strengthen the position of the Old English magnates, creating himself Earl of March and his strongest supporters the Earls of Desmond and Ormonde. During the reign of Edward III, Irish families who owed their titles and grants to him formed an embryonic 'Patriot party' in response to the King's efforts to curtail their power. They resented royal officials born in England and claimed the right of their own caste to rule Ireland. Edmund Curtis writes that "[u]p to the end of the eighteenth century the Anglo-Irish of every kind maintained this spirit of colonial

independence."[7] Horatio's pseudonym, then, invokes a seminal moment in the formation of the mixed Irish polity and the evolution of Irish nationalism.

The characters of the principal members of the household are established during Horatio's convalescence, a process recorded in the remaining two letters of Volume I. Like the earlier delineations of the peasants, these portraits are designed to counteract the negative images constructed in English travelogues and dramatised in Restoration and Hanoverian comedy. The characterisation of Father John, the household chaplain, recuperates the reputation of Irish priests, typically portrayed as either wily and cunning or superstitious and ignorant. The depiction of the Prince challenges the stereotypes that ridiculed Irish squires and noblemen for their absurd pretensions, false pride, and eccentricities of speech and manner; and Irish womanhood is vindicated by Glorvina, whose beauty and demeanour discredit English criticism of the appearance and sexual conduct of the native women.[8]

Horatio tells J. D. that like many Irish priests in the eighteenth century, Father John was educated in France where he was influenced by the Enlightenment. Thus he is intellectually and socially sophisticated, but he ministers to the poor and illiterate although he has no official duties in the parish. Horatio writes that his meeting with the chaplain has uprooted one of his deepest prejudices, but he is even more impressed by the Prince, who does have many of the traits ascribed to his class. Yet he is an inspiring individual, a human analogue of the majestic ruin he inhabits. Although his health is deteriorating and his mood is often pensive, his manner is gracious and his conversation fascinating in its diction, cadence and romantic melancholy for the past.

Although he is not learned in other areas, he is an expert on the native history and traditions of his country, "which notwithstanding peevish complaints of its degeneracy, he still loves with idolatrous fondness" (1. 194).

The letters reflect Horatio's affection and respect for Inismore's priest and his reverence for his host, but their main concern is Glorvina. In their descriptions of the Princess, the term "wild Irish" takes on a new meaning. Physically, she is a replica of Olivia Desmond particularised by strawberry-blond hair and an antique Irish 'bodkin' or hairclip. She also shares Olivia's patriotism, musical genius and expert knowledge of Irish culture; but her costumes, her habitat and her exotic name, an amalgam of the Gaelic words for 'sweet voice', make her ethnic character more pronounced. While Horatio's injuries are healing, she visits his sickroom daily; and he is revitalized by her music and conversation. Her mastery of the classics is enhanced by her command of French, English and Italian literature; and her response to these works is acutely perceptive. However, she never parades her learning; and her manner is natural and unassuming. The invalid writes that there is something "beautifully wild about her air and look, that is indescribable. . . .[W]ere I to personify the word spell, she should sit for the picture" (1.203). In place of the boisterous red-haired pedant he had imagined, he has discovered a woman who embodies all the best features of nature and art.

A discourse on Irish music, in which Glorvina discusses the illustrious provenance and the national significance of the Irish harp, begins their relationship and establishes the pattern of their encounters. Horatio is initially amused by her enthusiasm for the national music, for like other Englishmen, he assumes that its style

is typified by music-hall comedy. Because Cambrensis and other early English visitors to the country conceded that the Irish had a genius for music, he believes in "the former musical celebrity" of the nation; but he believes the native tradition has since been thoroughly debased. By the end of the interview his attitudes and assumptions have been transformed by Glorvina's lecture on the Irish origins of British musical culture and above all by her rendition of the Gaelic anthem, the ancient Irish air of Erin go Brach. The beauty and pathos of the music seem embodied in the singer, and Horatio's love affair with Ireland begins.

The incident marks the end of his isolation in his sickroom/nursery. He has recovered from his accident/rebirth and is now ready to take his place in the society of Inismore. Accordingly, the next day brings an offer from the Prince, who suggests that he join the household as Glorvina's drawing teacher. Horatio is delighted, for he has been searching for a pretext to stay on at the castle until his father's annual visit to Ireland a few months hence. Already the contempt for women engendered by his experiences with female members of the English aristocracy has dissipated, and he feels a strong rapport with the Princess. By the time another week has passed, his impression of Ireland exactly reflects his impression of Glorvina; and he has decided that the study of the country "would afford to the mind of philosophy a rich subject of analysis, and to the powers of poetic fancy a splendid series of romantic detail" (2. 6-7).

The reflection introduces the fifteen letters of Volume II, which constitute the record of a summer immersion course in language, history, and civilisation. The historic seat of the Inismores proves to be an unofficial National Museum and Archives

containing armour, weapons, documents, and other family artifacts which the Prince has managed to preserve. The faculty of the ad hoc academy are all experts in Gaelic civilisation, and each contributes specialised knowledge to the curriculum. Father John is Horatio's Gaelic teacher, Glorvina combines pronunciation drill with instruction in literature and folklore, and the Prince is an authority on military history. The dynamics of the educational process reverse the roles of coloniser and colonised and undercut the premise of English cultural superiority. Glorvina dislikes drawing, so Horatio soon abandons the role of teacher and gives himself over completely to his 'masters,' who effect his intellectual, moral and spiritual renovation.

Virtually every aspect of Gaelic culture is introduced and situated in a social and historical context that justifies and dignifies native customs and traditions. Irish dress, ornaments, weapons, military institutions, poetry, music, festivals and funeral rites are linked to the venerable civilisations of antiquity, particularly that of classical Greece.[9] The same strategy is used to justify religious practices that English Protestants considered superstitious and idolatrous, which at any rate are associated exclusively with the Irish masses. Inismore's upper class observes the forms of Catholicism and makes no attempt to discourage beliefs that solace the lower orders. Privately, however, Glorvina, the Prince and Father John are freethinkers. Because historically religion played a major role in Irish insurgency, Owenson's suggestion that Irish leaders are now Catholic in name only aims to alleviate English fear of the revolutionary potential of the native religion.

Horatio's preceptors attribute a natural genius for poetry, music, dancing and languages to all classes of the native Irish, and they also stress the native veneration for history, literature and classical scholarship. The theory that the Milesians were of Phoenician origin is offered as an explanation for the long history of literacy in Ireland and for her pre-mediaeval reputation as the most enlightened nation in Europe. The current authority of oral tradition is also used to upgrade the Irish image, and a detailed knowledge of genealogy and folklore is represented as another national characteristic testifying to the civilised mentality of the 'mere' Irish and their leaders.

Unappealing national traits that are impossible to deny are justified by reference to Ireland's history of colonisation. Glorvina claims that the Irish have an innate respect for rank and lineage because the Milesians had a caste society in which the social hierarchy was strictly regulated. The apparently natural tendency to rebellion and anarchy is actually the product of an "inquisitorial persecution" lasting for centuries. The related issue of Irish alcoholism is also introduced and similarly rationalised. The intemperance of the lower Irish is attributed to their hopeless situation and to a government fiscal policy that encourages the sale of spirits. In his experience of upper-class society, Horatio finds no evidence of alcohol abuse.

Owenson returns to the language issue when Horatio finds that "purer and more grammatical English is spoken generally through Ireland, than in any part of England whatever" (2. 148). This is so, he learns, because the regional dialects characteristic of England are not a feature of Irish society. Moreover, he discovers that the brogue, the accent universally associated with the Irish, is confined to the lower

classes. While it differs from English aristocratic pronunciation, he finds the accent of the upper classes charmingly melodious. When he learns some Gaelic he becomes enthusiastic about the native language and literature, and introduces Irish lyrics into his letters. Reusing a device that was successful in her first novel of Ireland, the author includes three translations of Gaelic folk songs in The Wild Irish Girl.

She also returns to the controversy over Ossian, but while St. Clair merely alludes to the dispute over the nationality of the bard and the authenticity of Macpherson's productions, the issue is the focus of an entire chapter in the new work. In Letter XII, the debate is restaged and the terms of the argument summarised in a thirty-page confrontation between Horatio, who defends the positions of Hugh Blair and the Scottish intellectual establishment, and Inismore and Father John, who support Samuel Johnson and the Irish antiquarians. Glorvina expresses educated popular opinion in the period when she ends the discussion by stating that Macpherson's versions of the Fenian cycle are improvements on the originals. Although the controversy had been more or less settled when the Highland Commission published its findings the year before The Wild Irish Girl came out, the episode advertises the Irish provenance of the most influential literary work of the time and demonstrates that respect for native traditions is not incompatible with sophisticated literary taste.[10]

The cultural highlight of Horatio's semester is the folk festival he attends on May Day. Letter XIX describes the floral decorations at the entrances of the cottages and castle and Celtic games, dances and traditions derived from ancient times.

Predictably, Glorvina's performance of the Irish jig is the highlight of the festivities, which are attended by all the inhabitants of Inismore. The events of the day reinforce the effects of Horatio's studies, and from this point he is completely enthralled by Ireland and Glorvina. The episode is an important part of a pattern of representation that publicises the charms of Irish folk culture and constructs it as a lifeline to a common British past.

The festival is a turning point in the relationship of the young couple, and the remainder of Volume II is largely given over to scenes of courtship and evidence that Horatio's passion is reciprocated. By the end of the summer it is obvious that Glorvina is deeply in love, but family history and economics are impediments to marriage. These issues are foregrounded near the end of Horatio's residence in Inismore. Letter XXII contains an enclosure from his father, who has been very worried about his younger son's future. It states that the Earl is busy negotiating Horatio's marriage to an English heiress, a connection that will compensate for his older brother's inheriting the bulk of the M. fortune. The next and last letter of Volume II describes a growing tension in the atmosphere of the castle and a corresponding deterioration of the master's health. Horatio suspects that some financial crisis is responsible although the matter is not discussed. Furthermore, a mystery surrounds Glorvina, for her boudoir contains some expensive modern furnishings and recent London publications that do not accord with the Inismores' poverty and isolation. But suspended in the euphoria of first love and convinced of

Glorvina's attachment, Horatio refuses to worry about the future or seriously consider the possibility that he has a rival.

The academic term ends and Volume III begins when he accompanies Father John on a business trip to the neighbouring province of Ulster, an excursion that provides another opportunity to advertise the attractions of Irish culture and society. While Glorvina is escorting the travellers to Inismore's border, they meet an Irish funeral procession and join the mourners for a time. The incident foreshadows the death of the Prince and introduces a lengthy description of native funeral rites. The digression appeals to a perennial English taste for portrayals of Irish funerals, a fashion that both reflected and encouraged the attention paid by dramatists and travel-writers to Irish obsequies.[11] Whereas most such representations were satiric in tone Owenson's rendition emphasises the dignity and solemnity of the archaic ritual.

When they leave the neighbourhood of Inismore, Horatio and the priest pass through a panoramic landscape to the house of a local squire where they spend the night. Considerable space is given to a description of the character and manners of his family, who function in the novel as examples of the minor gentry. Like the other classes of the Gaelic community portrayed in the letters, they are depicted as generous, congenial, hospitable and eloquent. However, their professional practice of farming distinguishes them from the peasants and the aristocracy.

The next morning the travellers pass over the border into Ulster, and Father John expounds on the history and character of the province. His lecture describes and explains the cultural disjunction that was to determine the political partition of the

nation in 1922. Horatio finds that the Gaelic language and manners have been largely supplanted by Scots dialect and mores, and he is depressed by the bleak and inhospitable tone of society. But his visit does have one highlight, for the tour ends with a lecture on the bardic institution in Ireland and a meeting with Dennis Hampson, a real-life relic of the ancient order. In 1806, the blind harper was 109 years old and living near Belfast with a daughter born when he was in his eighties. Drawing attention to this fact helps to construct Ireland as a repository of an authentically British culture grounded in the classical civilisation of Homer.

During the return trip Horatio accidentally learns the purpose of the excursion. The Prince is deeply in debt and has mortgaged Glorvina's jewels to a creditor in Belfast. He finally realises the full extent of the family's financial problems and races back to Inismore resolved to risk his future and the wrath of both fathers by revealing his identity and proposing marriage. But he is forestalled by the discovery that there is another contender for Glorvina's hand, a mysterious political refugee who arrived at the castle a few years earlier and claimed sanctuary from the Prince. According to the Nurse the man is prosperous, distinguished, and now lives in America. He corresponds with the Prince, makes an annual visit to the castle, and has given Glorvina the costly furnishings Horatio has noticed in her boudoir. Horatio decides he has misjudged her feelings, and overwhelmed with disillusion and despair, he leaves Inismore. On the point of departure he receives a package from the master, now bedridden and too sick for visitors. It contains a plain gold band the Prince has always worn and a note that refers to Horatio as his son. The gift foreshadows the union that

ends the romance and establishes the descendant of Cromwell's henchman as the heir to the tradition embodied in his host.

When he leaves Inismore Horatio is summoned to Dublin by his father, who has come over to Ireland with his son's future bride and her father. Letter XXX describes their meeting and a plan to secure Horatio a seat in parliament following the marriage. Unfortunately, he feels only contempt for his conventionally beautiful fiancée and his future father-in-law. He compares them to the Inismores and dwells on the contrast between their shallowness and vulgarity and the distinction of their Irish counterparts. He goes on to describe his crippling apathy, his distaste for urban life and the illness brought on by his exile from Glorvina and Inismore. Lord M. is seriously worried, but he is also enthusiastic about the marriage, and Horatio hesitates to disappoint him by confessing the cause of his malady. Eventually, then, the Earl leaves for the West to prepare M. House for the bridal party. He wants the wedding to take place on his Irish estate because he intends to move permanently to Connacht, and he believes the occasion will be a chance to win the good will of his tenants and the regional gentry. He also informs Horatio that he plans to remarry but does not disclose the identity of his future wife.

H.M.'s final letter to J.D. is followed by a third-person narrative that moves quickly towards the conclusion of the tale. A series of events that parallels Horatio's original movement westward begins with his precipitate return to M. House after having decided to make a full confession to his father. Finding that the Earl is living at the lodge, he proceeds there directly but discovers that his parent is visiting somewhere

in the neighbourhood. More or less involuntarily, he takes the track to Inismore, arriving on its borders at sundown. As a form of pilgrimage he retraces the route of his original journey, first visiting the ruined chapel, now empty and ghostly in the moonlight, then proceeding to the castle where once again, he conceals himself behind a crumbling wall. The fortress is dark and apparently lifeless, and he decides to enter. The rooms are deserted and stripped of their furnishings; but Glorvina's harp remains, vibrating in the seawind blowing through the open casements. Drawn by its "wild melody" Horatio enters her boudoir. There he is overcome with grief, for he is convinced that the Prince's death or Glorvina's marriage has permanently destroyed the idyllic world of Inismore.

The elegiac interlude ends with the entry of a servant, who tells him that the castle's furnishings have been seized, Inismore has been arrested, and the household has accompanied him to jail. Horatio gallops to the rescue, but finds that the mysterious stranger has been there before him and paid the bankrupt's debt. The dying Prince and his entourage are now on their way back to Inismore, having left the Nurse to pack up. She assures Horatio that Glorvina loves him but claims that she will marry her family's benefactor out of gratitude and concern for her father. Horatio dashes frantically back to the castle to prevent this disaster.

The climax of the novel assembles all the key players in the chapel where Horatio, hiding behind a pillar, watches for a second time as a procession enters and approaches the altar. Father John is in the lead, followed by the Prince, carried in an arm chair by servants. Behind him is Glorvina, wrapped in a long veil and leaning on

the arm of a stranger whose face is not visible from Horatio's perspective. The party halts at the altar, the couple kneel, and "the last red beams of the evening sun" shine on the votarists as Father John begins the words of the marriage service. Chaos ensues when Horatio erupts from his hiding place, stops the ceremony, and clasps Glorvina in his arms. Mutually dumbfounded, he and the groom recognise each other as father and son. The Earl reveals their identities to the Inismore and explains that he, like Horatio, has misrepresented himself out of necessity. Although he was anxious to help the Prince and gain the confidence of the native population, his good intentions were frustrated by prejudice, "the enemy of all human virtue and human felicity" (3. 228-29). He declares that his "only crime was, that in a distant age, an ancestor of mine, by the fortune of war, had possessed himself of those domains, which, in a more distant age, a remoter ancestor of yours won by similar means" (3. 229). He also defends the stratagem that created the opportunity to raise Glorvina to her rightful station.

Following the scene of recognition and unmasking, the group positions itself for the death of Inismore. Horatio, weeping, holds his left hand and Father John, also in tears, his right; the Earl, his face covered with his hand, leans on the back of his chair, and Glorvina bends over him to receive his last kiss. The inner circle is surrounded by servants who are also in tears. The tableau symbolises the passing of an order in decline since the sixteenth century, but it also symbolises a return to a key moment in a merger that revitalized Gaelic culture in the fifteenth century. The death of the Prince is sad but it marks the rebirth of his tradition in a modern version of the social order promoted by Edward II and Mortimer. The scene evokes grief for the

passing of a heroic way of life that has now become anachronistic, but it also indicates that Gaelic tradition will be perpetuated and renewed.

Like The Novice of St. Dominick, The Wild Irish Girl ends with a marriage portending a new era of national consensus and cultural renaissance, but the event is not represented. The conventional romance closure is supplanted by an edict that appoints 'Mortimer' the Earl's representative in Ireland and instructs him to institute reforms on the M. estates. The ukase is composed in the form of a letter in which the Earl renounces his suit and exhorts Horatio to discount "national and hereditary prejudice" and marry the woman destined to be "the intimate associate" of his soul. The patriarch makes his son the heir to his Irish property providing that he resides in the country, practices benevolent paternalism and ignores religious differences. "[L]et the names of Inismore and M. be insuperably blended," he writes, "and the distinctions of English and Irish, of protestant and catholic, for ever buried." He ends by expressing the hope that "this family alliance" will be "prophetically typical of a national unity of interests and affections between those who may be factiously severe, but who are naturally allied" (3. 258-59).

The final statement sums up the novel's feminine perspective of the political, social and emotional aspects of Ireland's relationship with England. In the allegorical scheme of the text, Glorvina is Ireland, a noble nation struggling to preserve its civilisation in adverse circumstances. In spite of poverty and isolation, the country is charming, cultivated and seductive, as successive generations of English invaders, represented by Lord M. and his son, have discovered. Ireland, in turn, has learned first

to respect and then to love her hereditary enemy, and the opportunity for a mutually fulfilling alliance is now available. But the terms must accord the smaller island the status of a wife in a companionate marriage, for plot, characterisation and point of view militate against the exploitation of the less prosperous partner. The first-person narrative mode forcefully conveys Horatio's veneration for the Inismores, and his judgment is confirmed by the actions and statements of the Earl. Lord M.'s own courtship of Glorvina and the blessing conveyed in his letter authorise the economic misalliance. The proclamation that ends the novel indicates that Ireland must be loved and supported by England, her individuality respected and her control of the domestic sphere acknowledged. In such an arrangement, Owenson implies, both partners will benefit, and national life in the United Kingdom will acquire the stability and harmony of a well-run household.

By treating the relationship between England and Ireland in terms of conventional sexual morality, Owenson asserts Ireland's moral right to a partnership role in the Union and warns against the consequences of the British government's reluctance to honour promises made during the "courtship" of Ireland in the period before the merger. Ireland and Glorvina bring out all that is best in Horatio; but tradition, financial considerations and overconfidence prohibit him from making a formal commitment until it is almost too late. Translated into the situation of Britain in the 1800s, the events of the novel indicate that England and Ireland are naturally bonded, but if Ireland's colonial status is perpetuated, a traumatic breakup is inevitable. The Earl's American disguise is a veiled warning about the possible repercussions of

policies that created an Irish diaspora, a device that foreshadowed the way in which the Union was eventually breached. The American-based Fenian organisation played a key role in the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (1869), legislation that according to Stephen Gwynn, destroyed the "sacrosanct character" of the Act of Union, which was conventionally represented as a union of hearts.[12]

The effectiveness of the marriage trope depends in part on Owenson's rendition of the Gaelic community that Glorvina represents. The description is romantically appealing, vividly realised, and buttressed by a scholarly apparatus that gave the fictional construct a claim to empirical status.[13] Every observation in the narrative is validated by scholars of Irish history and culture and informed observers of Irish society. The list of authorities includes Keating, O'Sullivan Beare, O'Flaherty, O'Halloran,the Royal Irish Academy, Charlotte Brooke, Joseph Cooper Walker and the contemporary English travel writer Arthur Young. Even Giraldus Cambrensis serves as a sympathetic witness: since he had almost nothing good to say about the Irish, his praise of their music is strong support for the novel's claims about Irish musical genius. The mass of documentary evidence is compiled in footnotes written in formal, academic prose that contrasts sharply with the high sentimental style of the fictional discourse. Often the footnotes include the author's personal experiences in Gaelic society and identify the real-life models of her character and settings. The practice serves as another type of authenticating device and establishes Owenson's own status as an authority.[14]

The blend of fiction and documentary produced a novel that has often been criticised for its didacticism and lack of structural unity, but the author's disregard for the limitations of genre was instrumental to the ideological power and commercial success of the work.[15] What is often described as her "pedantry" invested her fiction with the authority of history and social science and thus made the ethnic fantasyland of Inismore believable to her English readers. The cultural project that inspired the promiscuous mingling of genres is reified in the physical disposition of the text, which illustrates the truth of Fredric Jameson's observation that "form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right."[16] The footnote apparatus that delivers the bulk of the information on Ireland repeatedly intrudes into the space normally occupied by fictional discourse in the novel and at times displaces the fictive content to the margins of the text. The utterance of the English narrator is thus disrupted by the Irish voice of the author/ethnographer, a move that imposes an ethnic version of an official but generically alien discourse on the stable, integrated form of romance, traditionally a site of western ruling-class ideology. The composition of the pages mimes the process of "writing back at empire" through the subversion of discourses and genres that historically, have worked to establish and maintain the political and cultural hegemony of centre over margin.

Owenson's representation is also empowered by her skilful use of allegory, a traditional device for achieving unity of theme and action. Her combination of realistic and figural descriptive modes maps the social formation of rural Ireland and the reform of colonial relations economically and effectively. The colonial encounter

is imaged in an allegorical scheme that combines historical events, the sexual imagery of imperialist discourse, and the central motif of the Aisling poetry, the rescue of Ireland by a Prince from over the water. The medley of factual and figurative language formulates a model of the type of policies and shifts in consciousness that could heal divisions created by the material and psychological effects of the Civil War. Roger Mortimer's English birth, his journey to Ireland to take possession of an inheritance won twelve decades earlier by a military genius, his appropriation of the role of the Gaelic chieftain in his sphere, his shift of allegiance from England to Ireland, his appointment as a reforming representative of English authority, and his exercise of power in partnership with a woman whose position legitimates his agency are all experiences shared by 'Henry Mortimer', the invader/absentee who penetrates Glorvina's stronghold and rescues her from poverty and isolation. By depicting the Prince of the folk motif as a reincarnation of Roger Mortimer embodied in an Ascendancy landlord, Owenson creates an image of the kind of sophisticated yet passionate Born-Again-Irish leadership that in her view, was necessary to revitalise Ireland's educated electorate in the dispiriting aftermath of the Revolution and the Union.

The integrative effect of the allegorical writing is strengthened by the structural unity achieved by the use of parallelism, comparison and contrast and the circularity of the plot. The description of Horatio's return to Dublin sustains the continuity of incident through the characterisation of his fiancée and her father, a family unit that functions as the antithesis of Glorvina and the Prince. The hero's dash back across

Ireland to Inismore follows the trajectory of his original journey exactly; and his reconnaissance of the castle and his eventual reunion with Glorvina mirror the sequence of events that first introduced him into the household. Here parallelism counteracts the disjunction created by the shift in the narrative mode and achieves closure without representing the formal resolution of the courtship theme. The narrative is also held together by the focus on Inismore, an effect achieved by the divisions of the three-volume novel. Each of the episodes in Volume I is a stage in a progress towards the utopian kingdom, while those in Volume III plot a series of departures and returns. There is a hiatus in the action in the middle volume, when Horatio lives in the community and assimilates its distinctive culture. Thus, the movement of the plot constructs Inismore as the magnetic centre of the dramatic world and invests Irish civilisation with a centrifugal power equal to that of English civilisation.

Owenson also makes her representation of Inismore appealing by incorporating Ossianic and Shakespearean elements, a type of borrowing practised by Macpherson, whose work is imbued with echoes of the Bible, Homer, Milton, Gray, Collins and Young.[17] Characters, settings, and incidents from Fingal, Temora and Hamlet are adapted to convey Owenson's conception of Ireland's Celtic past and its continuity with the present. Inismore is a fully realised recreation of the ruined world of Morven, a realm haunted by the ghosts of dead warriors and memories of invasions that destroyed a society distinguished by altruism, heroism, individuality and the type of environment that according to Burke's influential treatise on the sublime, elicited the

most profound responses of imagination and feeling. Like the blind bard of Morven, the patriarch of Inismore is an aging, infirm yet defiant remnant of a society in its final stage of dissolution. Similarly to Ossian he is defeated by a new order of prudent, materialistic and callow men; but he isolates himself and clings stubbornly to the values of the last age, which he struggles to preserve for posterity.[18] Melvina, "the maid of the voice of love" who was married to Ossian's dead son Oscar, is recreated in Glorvina, who like Ossian's daughter-in-law, is the inspiration, consolation and sole companion of her ailing but still heroic relative.[19] The description of the deserted castle and Horatio's grief over the romantic world that has disappeared evokes the mood of melancholy and nostalgia for the past that made Ossian so appealing to contemporary readers, and in some instances the mood is evoked in Macpherson's own images. The description of a solitary figure weeping in the empty ruins of his sweetheart's family seat introduces Macpherson's "Oithona," one of the miscellaneous poems published with Fingal. The verse tells the story of an English princess and an Irish prince who fall in love despite nationalistic differences.[20]

If Inismore is an Irish Morven, it is also an Irish Elsinore, where the student Horatio learns that "there are more things in the world. . . than are dreamed of in [his] philosophy." Like Hamlet's friend, 'Mortimer' is transformed by his experience in a maritime outpost of metropolitan Europe, and his skepticism gives way to belief in the active influence of the past. The novel's protagonist also resembles Hamlet himself in his procrastination and his reaction to the loss of his sweetheart. She, in turn, recalls Ophelia in her delicacy, her innocence and the madness brought on by the death of her

father, a breakdown portrayed in Glorvina's last scene in the novel. Owenson also draws on the progress in Act I of Hamlet to create the dramatic power of the Inismore's introduction into the text, the most memorable episode of The Wild Irish Girl.

Despite the constant invocation of historical memory and the prominence of the ubi sunt motif in the last few episodes, the novel is not, as Fiona Stafford argues, "largely a lament for old Ireland, following the Union of 1800."[21] The renewal of Horatio- - - and of the Earl- - - portrays the redemptive power of tradition, and the allegorical scheme represents the past as the source of an integrative ideal that can impel the nation to a new and higher stage. The narrative delineates the reincarnation of pre-Reformation Ireland on a higher social and subjective plane and describes a new cultural synthesis arising from the historical dialectic that divided the unified sixteenth-century state. Backed by the power of English authority, Glorvina and 'Mortimer,' both enlightened products of a secular, humanist education, will recreate a professionalised version of the paternalistic, patriotic local rule practised by Inismore.

The image of Ireland constructed in The Wild Irish Girl appealed strongly to readers in every Western country, and the novel not only went through numerous editions in English; it was translated into all the major European languages and republished at various intervals throughout the nineteenth century. One source of its appeal to English audiences was undoubtedly the moderation of its political message, which calls for compromise and cross-cultural dialogue. The conservation of the Irish heritage is represented as a co-operative venture of England and Ireland and social

reform as the product of education rather than collective political action. The Ascendancy landlord and his heir regret their ancestor's deeds, but their agent's land, rather than their own, is offered as reparation. Furthermore, the Prince's inveterate hostility to the family that displaced his is shown to be unreasonable and self-destructive. The Earl points out that the Celts themselves took the land by conquest, and the lodgekeeper's history indicates that the Inismores are partly responsible for their decline in the eighteenth century. The resolution of the tale indicates that past injustices must be forgotten and a new start made within the prevailing economic and political dispensation.

Nevertheless The Wild Irish Girl was an outspoken statement of Irish nationalist sentiment at a moment when such expression was actively discouraged by the British government, and for a time it was a political issue in Dublin. Eventually, the authorities decided the book was harmless and the author was taken up by the establishment, but official acceptance was far from a foregone conclusion when the novel was published. At any rate, Dublin Castle's initial impression that the text was subversive was verified by the long-term influence of its cultural politics. The work was a bridge between the Irish literary revival of the eighteenth century and its counterpart in the 1830s, when a new wave of artists, writers and intelligentsia turned to Gaelic Ireland to vindicate Ireland's claims to a separate civilisation. The resurgence crystallised in the formation of Young Ireland, first a cultural society but later a radical cadre that militated politically against the Union. Although they failed to gain popular support for their abortive revolution against England in 1848, the Young Irelanders

had a deep and abiding influence on Irish society, for they not only revived the revolutionary republicanism of Wolfe Tone but also served as a model for the cultural movements that developed in counterpoint with radical political initiatives such as Fenianism and the Land League.[22] Thomas Davis, the leader of the professional middle-class organization, recapitulated the themes of the The Wild Irish Girl in emphasising the genius, bravery and loyalty of the mere Irish, the vitality and power of expression of Irish culture, the superior values of rural society, and the importance of a passionate love of country. Like Owenson, he advocated the revival of native arts, crafts, language, literature and festivals to instil in Protestants a pride in Irish descent and bind the various classes and religions in Ireland together. Davis also followed Owenson in reiterating the Enlightenment view of nationality as a product of climate, education, history and other changeable and empirical influences rather than of unalterable factors such as race or religion, a model that made the Gaelic heritage available to all the constituencies in the Irish social formation.[23] Mediated by Young Ireland, Owenson's view of national identity was the ideological dynamic of the nationalist combatants in 1916 and 1920-21 and the template of the official culture of the republic formed in 1922.

Notes

1. Quoted in Lionel Stevenson, The Wild Irish Girl, p. 68.

2. Sydney Owenson, The Wild Irish Girl: a National Tale, 3 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1806),1. xxix.

3. Edward MacLysaght states that the anecdote from Moryson's work has been "well-known" since the Itinerary was published and notes that the late seventeenth-century travel-writer John Dunton recounted it in manuscript letters that he recently edited and published. See Teague Land or A Merry Ramble to the Wild Irish: Letters From Ireland, 1698 (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), p. 19. The original is repeated twice in Moryson's venomous account of the native Irish. See An Itinerary Containing his Ten Yeeres Travell through the Twelve Dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Sweitzerland, Netherland, Denmarke, Poland, Italy, Turky, France, England, Scotland & Ireland (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1907), vol. 4, pp. 202, 238.

4. See Ian Campbell Ross, " 'One of the Principal Nations of Europe'," pp. 14-15.

5. See D. W. Hayton, "From Barbarism to Burlesque: English Images of the Irish c. 1660-1750," pp. 12-18.

6. Quoted in Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland, p. 100.

7. Ibid., p. 104.

8. See D. W. Hayton, "From Barbarian to Burlesque," pp. 12-16, 20-23.

9. Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 126.

10. Tom Dunne argues that Glorvina's defence of Macpherson anticipates Owenson's later retreat from her positive view of Gaelic culture and history. But in my opinion, Glorvina expresses the author's endorsement of a literary initiative that

stimulated international interest in Gaelic traditions and influenced her own work. For Dunne's analysis, see "Fiction as 'the best history of nations': Lady Morgan's Irish novels,". The Writer as Witness: literature as historical evidence, ed. Tom Dunne (Cork, 1987), pp. 142-143.

11. See D. W. Hayton, "From Barbarian to Burlesque," p. 17.

12. Stephen Gwynn, The History of Ireland, p. 471. See also J. C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, pp. 364-369.

13. Gary Kelly, English Fiction of the Romantic Period, pp. 92-94., and Ina Ferris, The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 126.

14. A footnote informs readers that the Prince of Inismore was modelled on Myles McDermott, styled the Prince of Coolavin, a descendant of one of Connaught's great Gaelic families. He was previously featured in a bona fide travelogue, Arthur Young's widely-read Philosophical Survey through Ireland (1782). Owenson explains that she met the Prince while staying with her father's relatives in Sligo and claims that her portrayal is an accurate description of the man. She also notes that Inismore Castle was based on the Castle of Dunluce near the Giant's Causeway in Ulster.

15. See for example Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. 7 (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1924), pp. 13-19; James M. Calahan, The Irish Novel: A Critical History (Boston: Twayne, 1988), pp. 24-30; Thomas Flanagan, The Irish Novelists 1800-1850 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 109-124; Ann H. Jones, Ideas and Innovations, pp. 190-194; James Newcomer, Lady Morgan the Novelist, pp. 32-39.

16. Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 141.

17. See John Dwyer, "The Melancholy Savage," p. 166.

18. See Fiona Stafford, " 'Dangerous Success'," p. 63.

19. Quoted in Paul J. Degategno, James Macpherson, p. 38.

20. See James Macpherson, p. 74.

21. "Dangerous Success," p. 56.

22. See John Hutchinson, The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, pp. 95-102.

23. See Isaiah Berlin, Vico and Herder, p. 163.

Emancipating Hellas: Revolution and Independence in Woman; or, Ida of Athens

Sydney Owenson's fourth novel was an intervention in the historical process that transformed the map of the Balkans by creating an autonomous, secular state from a strongly religious colonial population without a sense of national consciousness. Written and published in 1809, the tale popularised a discourse that catalysed the Greek War of Independence (1821-29) and determined the official character of Hellas, the ancient name of Greece which was given to the nation created by the struggle. Owenson novelised the terms of the discourse in a tale of contemporary Greece and England, settings that also provided the context for an ambitious attempt to recapitulate the major themes of the Enlightenment and the Revolutionary debate. The novel portrays the critical effect of environmental influences on the formation of subjectivity, the moral and political implications of natural law, the reform of education on rationalist lines, criticism of institutional religion, the interplay of sex and politics in court culture, the exploitation of women by courtly gallantry and the mistress system, the susceptibility of uneducated women to romantic folly, and the professionalisation of domesticity. The synthesis of philosophical, social, cultural and historical issues was aimed at promoting Greek independence, criticising British policy in Ireland, feminising masculine discourse, intellectualising female literary culture and constructing the 'author' of the text as a female philosopher, a narrative persona previously adopted by Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays.

Ida of Athens appeared at a crossroads in the history and consciousness of a collectivity that for some 2500 years had not possessed an exclusive political identity represented by an autonomous state. The Greeks were one people among many in the East Roman Empire created by Constantine, and although they eventually became politically and culturally dominant, the Greeks of Byzantium derived their sense of identity from their status as citizens of a great Christian Empire rather than from identification with the land or civilisation of ancient Greece. The metropolitan core of Byzantium was far from the Greek homeland, and its theocratic leadership was hostile to the philosophical, religious and moral conceptions of antiquity, which were pagan and polytheistic. The Greek subjects of Byzantium thus had no concept of nationality in the modern definition of the term, for they had no sense of being part of an historical tradition that linked them to a territorially-rooted, primordial ethnic community.[1]

Yet in spite of official opposition to "Hellenism," and in spite of the lack of attempts at ethnic identification with the ancient Greeks, the Byzantines did foster the study of Greek grammar, syntax and rhetoric, and in time, a knowledge of the ancient Greek language eventually became more or less mandatory for appointment to the upper ranks of the Byzantine administration. By the eleventh century, this tendency had created an intellectual aristocracy restricted to those with a Hellenic education, although the prestige of this education did not imply any romantic admiration for the land of ancient Greece or its contemporary inhabitants. After a history of conquest by the Macedonians, the Romans, the Goths, the Slavs and other invaders, the territory of

classical Hellas had been reduced to an insignificant province of the Byzantine Empire, inhabited by a multi-racial stock with an at best remote genetic connection to the race of Pericles and Phydias.

Nevertheless, the final stage of the Empire was marked by the rise of a hellenizing movement among the cultural elite, some of whom blamed the Christian Orthodox mentality for the Byzantine decline. This strain of philosophical radicalism crystallised in the thinking of George Gemistos Pletho, a high-ranking member of the Orthodox clerical establishment. He saw in the pagan civilisation of Greek antiquity the authentic cultural heritage of Byzantine Greeks, in the people of the Pelopponese a direct genetic link to the classical past, and in their territorial community the locus of a regenerated Greek society. Any practical possibility of restoring Hellenic civilisation in its original site ended with the fall of Constantinople and the subsequent Turkish conquest of Greece, and at any rate, support for Pletho's ideas was confined to a small group of Byzantine intellectuals. Most educated Byzantines and the mass of the inhabitants of mainland Greece believed that that the fall of Byzantium was temporary punishment for the sins of the community, and that at some future time, God would restore his earthly kingdom to its former glory.

The myth was fostered by the Orthodox Church during the next three centuries, when the collective identity of Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire was exclusively religious. Under the Ottoman millet system Orthodox Christians of all ethnic origins comprised a single political category under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who derived his authority from the Sultan. Yet the

Hellenistic tendency of the Greek intelligentsia survived under Ottoman rule and helped to produce an eighteenth-century revival of Pletho's myth in Greek communities both inside and outside the Empire. Greek intellectuals who were exposed to the modern Western concept of the political nation and the West's sentimental admiration for Greek antiquity propagated the idea that the people of the Pelopponese were the direct descendants of the ancient Greeks and should reestablish a national state in the land occupied by their ancestors.

That this idea produced a revolution among a people whose economic, political and religious elites had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, and whose general population derived its sense of identity from the family and the Christian Orthodox tradition, was due in part to the new power of print technology. Working from the metropolitan centres of continental Europe, nationalist intellectuals produced a flood of publications for Greek readers both inside and outside Ottoman territory. Through this medium, they disseminated Enlightenment philosophy, French Revolutionary principles, and the idea of a regenerated Hellas, a secular, self-determining state that would raise Europe to new heights of civilisation. Their efforts produced a Greek Enlightenment and an equivalent of the eighteenth-century Gaelic revival in Turkish-occupied Greek territory.

The element most receptive to neo-Hellenic nationalism was the Greek merchant class that by the mid-eighteenth century controlled the internal and external commerce and navigation of the Ottoman Empire. Because the enterprise was operated from centres located in western Europe and southern Russia as well as within

Turkish territory, many of the participants were influenced by Western liberal thinking. The middle and lower ranks of traders saw in neo-Hellenic ideology a weapon with which to oppose the vested interests of the notables (the Greek landed gentry), the Orthodox ecclesiastical administration, and more powerful members of the merchant class, all of whom depended on Ottoman support for their privileged status in Greek society. Also receptive to neo-Hellenism were the Phanariots, a bureaucratic aristocracy situated in Constantinople. They comprised the civil arm of the Orthodox administration and also served the Porte as diplomats, policy-makers, hospodars (governors) of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in Rumania, and dragomans (deputies) of the Sultan and the High Admiral of the Ottoman Fleet. Despite the power they wielded under the Ottomans, they were bearers of the tradition of the Byzantine noblesse de la robe and some came to believe that their mission was to revive the thought and culture of their Hellenic ancestors.

The practical implementation of neo-Hellenic ideology was abetted by the decline of Ottoman power, but it was also dependent on Western support, which depended in turn on a change in Western attitudes towards the contemporary Greeks. These were derived in the first instance from the writings of Virgil, Plautus, Juvenal, Cicero and other Roman authors who construed the Greeks as impudent, duplicitous, lecherous, vain, and servile. Roman colonialist discourse strongly influenced the Renaissance humanists, who applied the Roman construction of the Greek character to the contemporary Greeks subjugated by the Ottomans. An image that justified Western failure to help fellow Christians in their struggle with the 'infidel' Turks was

propagated in European literature both popular and canonical, creating a prejudice that was enhanced by the reports of the European travellers who visited Greece in ever-increasing numbers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A topos of their narratives was the contrast between the ancient glory and the present degradation of the Greeks and their culture, a theme that Owenson contested with Ida of Athens.

Following her practice in The Novice, the author embodied the broad historical movement addressed in Ida in the histories of fictitious individuals who are modelled on outstanding historical figures. Her construction of plot, character and dialogue draws on the backgrounds, temperaments, activities and political thinking of three individuals who dominated the independence movement: Rigas Velestinalis (1757-1798), Adamantios Koreas (1748-1835) and Count Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776-1831). All of these men were propagandists and political activists who transmitted the secular ideals of the Enlightenment to the theocratic world of Ottoman Greece.

Rigas, the son of a merchant of Velestino in Thessaly, served as secretary to the dragoman of the Porte and the hospodar of Wallachia before he moved to Vienna and became a radical who participated in the publication of revolutionary tracts. The most important of these contained a revolutionary proclamation and the draft of a constitution strongly influenced by French Revolutionary models. In December 1797 he set off for the Pelopponese to prepare the way for an uprising that would spread to other Greek centres, but he was betrayed to the Austrian police and arrested in Trieste with seditious materials. The Austrians turned him over to the Ottoman government, who executed him in June 1798.

In contrast to Rigas, who advocated the violent overthrow of the Ottomans, Koreas was an advocate of intellectual revolution as a means of liberating Greece. The son of a Smyrna merchant, he settled permanently in Paris in the 1780s, where he wrote and published prolifically to promote the formation of a modern Greek republic organised on French lines. In poetry, political tracts and prefaces to scholarly works on Greek language and literature, he claimed that Greece was the birthplace of the high civilisation of the Renaissance and Enlightenment and that the modern Greeks, although debased by centuries of Orthodox and Ottoman rule, were the direct descendants of the glorious Hellenes. The linchpin of his programme was educational reform, for he believed that intellectual emancipation would enable Greece to recover her former status as a cultural leader of the civilised world.

Like Koreas, Kapodistrias believed that Greek liberation would follow an intellectual revolution and that the Greeks should educate themselves and bide their time until the historical process made them independent. An Ionian aristocrat born on Corfu, he was strongly affected by the Enlightenment, but he was also closely connected to the Orthodox Church through his mother's family. While still a young man he made his mark as Secretary of State of the Septinsular Republic, which was comprised of the seven major Ionian islands. The partly autonomous Greek state was established in 1799 by Russia and Turkey to counter Napoleonic expansion to the East. Kapodistrias successfully defended the republic when it was invaded by Ali Pasha of Ioannina in 1807, but later that year, it was legislated out of existence when the Treaty of Tilsit gave Napoleon control of the islands. Kapodistrias emigrated from Greece,

joined the service of Tsar Alexander I, and in 1816 became his joint foreign minister, in which capacity he negotiated for Russia at the Congress of Vienna. During his Russian diplomatic career he remained involved in Greek politics, and he became his county's first president in 1828.

Personality traits and details of the backgrounds and careers of Rigas and Kapodistrias are embodied in the characters and experience of Ida's Greek hero and his father, while another important character, the heroine's preceptor and mentor, is loosely modelled on Koreas. The tale also includes a fictive portrait of Kapodistrias' opponent Ali Pasha, a renegade Ottoman governor who profited from the decline of the imperial government to create an almost autonomous empire in the western Balkans. His master plan was to gain control of the Ionian Islands, a scheme he furthered by intriguing with the French, British, Russians and Turks, all of whom he treated with impartial treachery. His temperament, ambitions, and conflict with Kapodistrias are evoked in the novel's Turkish antagonist.

Owenson begins with a scholarly preface that establishes the background and themes of the tale. Using the contrast between ancient and modern Athens as a paradigm, she equates the status of women with the status of their society, which she links in turn to the system of government. She argues that although the characters of Periclean Athens and its women have been superficially debased by the decline of classical civilisation, both the culture and the inhabitants of the city are essentially unchanged, for they are the product of climate, geography and democratic institutions that developed in the seminal period of racial evolution. Her argument draws on

Enlightenment epistemology and sociology to combat anti-Greek prejudice and establishes a system of correspondences that links the emancipation of women and the emancipation of Greece.

The introduction of the preface is followed by a synopsis of Greek history from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the late eighteenth century, an overview intended to prove that the spirit of liberty manifested in Periclean institutions has survived to the present day. After alluding to the catastrophic effects of the Turkish conquest, Owenson moves quickly to the rise of Western-style nationalism, which she construes as a resurgence of the classical ethos. She attributes the radicalisation of the movement for national independence to Russian intervention, an allusion to the fact that revolution in the Greek communities of the Empire was encouraged by Catherine the Great, whose expansionist schemes could only be fulfilled at the expense of the Ottoman state. Because Catherine promised Greeks a partnership, albeit limited, in a restored Christian Orthodox empire, St. Petersburg became a hotbed of Greek revolutionary activity in the second half of the eighteenth century. During the period the Russian government helped to foment a number of local insurrections in the Balkans, including a rising in the Pelopponese in 1770 that was inadequately supported by Russian troops and ammunition.[2] Owenson's account of the disaster castigates both of the Great Powers involved for their treatment of the revolutionaries: "Deserted by their allies, subdued by tyrants, the patriots of Greece were only rescued from slavery by death from the swords of the Ottomans. Thousands were massacred, and it was a

point of debate in the ottoman council whether the whole race should not be exterminated."[2]

Finally, the author extracts a general principle from the summary of local history. The abuse of power will ultimately undermine authority because "individual misery inevitably awakens public and general resistance." The lesson of history, ignored by "existing states," teaches that "the law of man should be regulated by the law of nature," and that the "the prejudice, the obstinacy, or crime of all rulers are finally retributed by those who have long languished and keenly suffered from their fatal influence" (xxvi-xxvii). These remarks invoke Revolutionary concepts of human rights and social compact to rationalise revolutionary violence in Greece and Ireland, whose histories of colonisation and resistance have obvious similarities. But if the preface establishes a cause and effect relationship between sedition and misrule, the fictional narrative does not condone violent civil disobedience. The novel applauds the spirit and vision of revolutionary nationalists such as Rigas and Wolfe Tone, but it endorses Koreas' and Kapodistrias' gradualist approach to emancipation.

The tale begins with an episode modelled on the plot of the Rossanglogallos, a popular poem that circulated in the Greek communities of the Empire in the early years of the nineteenth century. The text is a satirical expression of the common belief that the Greek elites were unlikely to lead any movement that advocated the violent overthrow of the Ottoman regime. The theme is embodied in a dialogue between a trio of foreign visitors to Greece and various representatives of Greek society. A Frenchman, an Englishman and a Russian are shocked by conditions in the country,

and searching for the cause of Greece's degradation, question a patriot, a metropolitan, a Phanariot, a merchant, a notable, and finally, an embodiment of Greece herself.[3] Owenson uses the scheme to introduce the social and political environment of Athens and to suggest that there is a striking contrast between the surface and essence of contemporary Greek civilisation.

The dichotomy is portrayed through the experience of an unnamed English diplomat stationed in Venice, who comes to Athens looking for novelty and sexual adventure. Although he is a man of sensibility, he was corrupted by a courtly woman before he matured, and he has since become "one of the most tasteful voluptuaries in the world" (1.6). Thus he was intrigued by the reports of Stamati, an exiled Greek patriot whom he met in Venice. The Greek was fulsome in his praise of Athens and the beauty of Athenian women, so the Englishman decided to investigate.

He enters the city on the feast of Barain, described in a footnote as the Islamic equivalent of Easter. The festival is an ordeal for the Greeks, who must pay an annual head tax and survive a chaotic saturnalia. The tourist is disgusted by the social ambience, which he finds uncivilised, and he is similarly dismayed by the physical character of the city. He is shocked to find the "matchless and beautiful monuments of athenian grandeur and athenian genius" indiscriminantly mingled with "poor churches, mean oratories, gloomy mosques and dervise convents" (1.11). He is also disappointed by the generally drab appearance of the city's inhabitants, which he attributes to the exclusion of women from public places. The mistrust of female sexuality ingrained in the religions that determine the community's manners is signified by "a mean-looking

church" dedicated to the Virgin at the site of the former temple of Venus and by a young Turkish woman denatured by a chedor that shrouds her from head to foot. Disgusted by his first impression of the city, the traveller decides to return immediately to Venice. But on his way back to his rooms he loses his way and discovers the vital culture masked by the depressing facade of the city.

Wandering below the Acropolis, he comes upon the Temple of Jupiter Olympus, which was begun by the Greeks and completed by the Romans. His contempt gives way to awe and he remains at the site until the heat drives him to a nearby grove, an oasis in the arid plain that surrounds the sublime ruin. Here he discovers a garden comprised of "the most attractive specimens of plant life in the eastern and western worlds," watered by a stream issuing from a natural fountain. In the centre of the miniature Eden, he finds a structure constructed from fragments of classical masonry. An eclectic but harmonious blending of Eastern and Western styles, the design constitutes an archeological record of the cultural influences that have created contemporary Greece. The most outstanding features of the structure are a Corinthian portico decorated by a magnificent frieze of the dance of the seasons, a modern Grecian vestibule, a spiral Turkish kiosk, pillars from the ruined temple of Venus, and metopes from the Parthenon.

The architect of the diminutive temple is introduced when the Englishman enters the portico and peers through a lattice interlaced with jasmine. The interior is divided by a curtain drawn back to reveal a marble bath in the rear, its basin surrounded by plants and filled by a fountain. The floor of the exterior area is covered

with Egyptian mats and furnished with a Delphic tripod and a sofa standing on a raised platform covered with a Persian carpet. Over the sofa is a canopy, which shades a sleeping woman. The voyeur is stunned by the figure, who is disposed in the serpentine line which Hogarth privileged in The Analysis of Beauty (1753):

> The unstudied attitude of the greek was curved in the true line of beauty; the arm which was thrown back to support her head, crimsoned the cheek that pressed its snow- - -the arm that was thrown carelessly round her bosom was half covered by the redundancy of her black and shining hair. Even in sleep, a shade of sadness hung on the dark arch of her expressive brow, and seemed to extend its softness to the smile that played round her half-closed lips; languishment and repose breathed round her. Yet, even in the passive tranquillity of profound sleep, on her countenance was still effused the deathless expression of intelligence, feeling and sensibility.

The woman is is attended by a small black slave boy who sits at her feet, fanning her with peacock feathers and sprinkling her with rose-water. He seems tranquillised by the languid atmosphere and his movements are increasingly desultory. Eventually, he falls asleep and drops the fan:

> Light as was the echo of its fall, it chased the spirit of repose from the brow of the greek. . . . At length, weary even of repose, she raised her recumbent form

> on her elbow, and holding back the dark tresses that shaded her face and neck fixed her large, dark eyes on the face of the sleeping boy. A tender smile played over her features; some words of caressing fondness murmured on her lips; and with an air of affectionate solicitude, she let fall the drapery of the couch around his form. There was, amidst the graces that accompanied this little act, an air of goodness which gave that indication of heart, without which in woman no loveliness can exist. (1. 24-27)

Convinced that he has discovered the inspiration of classical genius, the voyeur steals away, revitalized by a new sense of purpose. He is determined to discover the identity of the voluptuous Greek and contrive a meeting with her.

The temple sequence draws on Greek mythology, the trope of the hortus conclusus, Hogarthian aesthetics, the abolition movement, and travel narratives that sentimentalised the shards of antique masonry found everywhere in contemporary Athens to fuse the nationalist and feminist themes of the novel. The episode represents the political reawakening of Greece (the 'cradle of democracy') from the 'Turkish Night' (a common Western metaphor for the Ottoman domination of Greece) in a way that construes femininity as an agent of Western progress. The setting demonstrates the dynamism of Hellenic civilisation by illustrating its ability to subsume and harmonise new elements, and the mise en scène positions Woman at the centre of cultural production and evolution. Because most slaves in the Ottoman Empire were white, the slave boy's color underlines the message of the tableau, which

feminises Hellenic political and aesthetic principles. The historical inaccuracy invokes the whole tradition of female benevolence exercised in the contemporary movement for the abolition of (New World) slavery.

As well as referring to current events in Britain, the disposition of the scene alludes to Greek mythology by restaging Acteon's discovery of Artemis at her bath. The allusion foreshadows the plot of the story and summons an archetypal image of virginal maternity and female agency to represent "maternal libido" as a creative, synthesising force deriving from female physiology but independent of physical reproduction.[4] The medley of images elevates woman's procreative role above the merely biological and demonstrates her capacity to preserve, synthesise and renew the arts and traditions of national culture.

The next episode situates the human goddess in the modern Greek community and introduces the Englishman to a class of people seldom represented in Western accounts of the country. When he leaves the precincts of the Temple of Jupiter, he unexpectedly meets Stamati, a character modelled on Stamatis, a radical associate of Rigas. The Greek is the son of a dragoman, but he says he has been pardoned and repatriated through the efforts of a woman, his cousin Ida Rosemeli. She has used her influence as a descendant of the ancient Athenian magistrates, or "archons," a republican aristocracy now reduced to a handful of families. He adds that she is an unusually prominent woman, not only because of her lineage but also because of her learning and artistic genius. The Englishman loathes bluestockings, so he is not impressed by Stamati's description, but he agrees to visit the Rosemelis. The two men

set off for the family's seaside villa outside the city, where the tourist discovers the woman who transformed his initial impression of contemporary Greece.

The Rosemeli household consists of Ida, her father, and her two young stepbrothers, who are gathered together en famille when the visitors arrive. A notable who has used his position to make a fortune in trade, Rosemeli is a strikingly handsome man, as are all his children. But if his "truly Grecian form and features" display "the sensibility of character which distinguishes the nation," his corruption is immediately apparent. Surrounded by slave boys performing "offices of indulgence and indolence," Rosemeli is lying on an "ottoman" smoking a "hookah"- - - a graphic illustration of his collaboration with the Ottoman Porte. Ida, on the other hand, is an exemplar of Western middle-class domesticity; she is working industriously on her embroidery and amusing her half-brothers when the visitors arrive.

The contrast in character established by the initial image of the father and daughter is emphasised as the scene progresses. Rosemeli and Stamati drink too much wine, and their conversation becomes increasingly imprudent. Both men are voluble in their support of the independence movement, Rosemeli because he exemplifies the many merchants who were frustrated by the arbitrariness and uncertainty of Ottoman rule, Stamati because he is an idealist. But if their motives are different, the two are equally rash and intemperate in their support of sedition, and the Englishman is equally contemptuous of both. Nevertheless, his dominant impression of the Greek family is positive, for he is extremely impressed by Ida's character. Her demeanour is composed, her conversation is judicious, and her rendition of a Greek folk song

displays an exceptional musical talent. Now charmed by her manners and genius as well as by her beauty, the tourist decides to prolong his visit.

Subsequently, the narrative plots his courtship of Ida in episodes that represent her as a cultural authority and mediator and an Enlightenment rationalist who is skilled in philosophical debate. The tourist becomes more infatuated with every encounter, but he views marriage pragmatically and sees no advantage in marrying a nameless colonial. Furthermore, he is certain he can convince Ida to become his mistress because he is unusually persuasive, and he has the usual Western opinion of the Greek moral character. Ida is completely unaware of his intentions, and she becomes increasingly attached to her unscrupulous suitor. The situation comes to a head at the festival of the seasons, an ancient rite revived by a Hellenist, Rosemeli's dead brother-in-law. In the folk festival produced for the occasion, Ida performs the leading role in the dance of Ariadne and delivers an eloquent sermon on Nature. During the homily, which attributes the decline of Greek civilisation to the destruction of natural religion by invaders and colonisers, the aristocrat decides to make the preacher an honest proposal. At this point, he receives a packet containing his recall to England and letters announcing his unexpected inheritance of the title and fortune of a distant relative. Fired by visions of his future social and political power, he retreats to Ida's sanctuary to think things over. He has just concluded that marriage is out of the question when the subject of his reverie arrives in person.

In the exchange that follows, Ida defends woman's nature as a desiring sexual being. She argues that female sexuality is a positive force because passion is the natural

agent of cultural evolution and social morality. Female conduct should be circumspect, but woman should not feel obliged to "blush to acknowledge her capability to feel a passion which the Deity himself inspires." After declaring that sexual desire is "the great and only spring of all human virtue, of all human effort, of all human felicity," she tells the Englishman he has reanimated feelings she has suppressed since the failure of an earlier relationship (1. 188-89). Her violation of conventional female etiquette convinces him that the moment is ripe for his proposal. Defining marriage as an institution based on "irrational prejudice," he urges her to participate in a natural union by enumerating the moral and material benefits of such a relationship. Ida rejects the rake decisively in an emotional defence of legal marriage, whereupon he arranges an immediate departure and leaves the country in a disappointed rage.

The second and third of the novel's four volumes move back in time to describe the formation of the female philosopher introduced in the first. Shortly after Ida's birth, a maternal uncle born in Greece to English parents returned to Athens after many years abroad. In the interim, he had made a large fortune and become a philosophe and a Hellenist. Having been convinced that conventional female education warps women's natural virtues, he adopted Ida from his widowed brother-in-law, purchased an estate in the Athenian countryside, and educated her according to Roussean principles. His efforts produced a perfectly feminine version of the rational and provident male constructed in Emile and an ethnic nationalist to boot. Ida's "insatiate" love of Greek history gave her a keen sense of the nation's former splendour

and present state of degradation, which she attributed to Ottoman tyranny and Greek apathy. When she reached adolescence, she began to give impromptu lectures on Greek history and culture to young people. She also composed patriotic songs and poems which circulated in manuscript among her father's friends and kindred and became noted for her talent as an extemporaneous improviser on Greek heroic themes. Although her bardic role violated the norms of female conduct in her community, the state of the country compelled her to advertise its virtues, errors and sufferings and to criticise the "false policy" of its rulers. Her efforts were condoned and even encouraged by her father and his peers, for their innate love of country authorized her marginal participation in public discourse.

When she was fifteen, she met her soulmate, Osmyn, who in a perpetration of an ancient custom was being honoured in the Agora for shooting one of the dangerous wolves that prowled the countryside. Her daiko (tutor) interviewed the young archer and learned he was a foundling raised in a monastery by an Orthodox monk. The boy received an education similar to Ida's, for his mentor, like hers, was an enlightened Hellenist. When he reached early adolescence, the monk took him to a province in revolt against the Ottomans, where he was captured in battle and sold as a slave to the disdar-aga, or military governor, of the region of Livadia. He told the daiko that although he had many privileges, he nevertheless detested his subordinate position.

The philosopher was impressed by Osmyn and decided to use his wealth and influence to buy his freedom. However, when he went to the aga's residence on the Acropolis to arrange the transaction, he learned the slave had run away. After a brief

nocturnal appearance in the Rosemeli's garden, he disappeared. Two years later he returned to Athens in disguise, killed a janissary who was attacking an old Greek pauper, and was arrested by other janissaries who dragged him off to the Acropolis to appear before the aga. As a runaway slave and a Greek who had assaulted a janissary, he faced torture and death, and Ida, who had witnessed the incident and recognised him, rushed to the courtroom. Before an all- male audience, she acted as Osmyn's lawyer, invoking patriotism and natural law to justify his crime. Impressed by the eloquence and aroused by the beauty and animation of the Greek Portia, the aga agreed to ransom rather than to execute the slave.

After Osmyn was remanded into the custody of the daiko, he related his adventures during the preceding two years. They began with his journey to Thebes, his reunion with his mentor, and his enlistment in the city's nationalist underground. The activities of the caloyer and the runaway alerted the Theban authorities, who attempted to arrest them in a surprise attack. The pair escaped, but the monk was fatally wounded and died in the pass of Thermopylae. In his last moments he identified himself as Osmyn's father and urged his son to devote his life to Greek liberation. He told him to find the expatriate nationalist Limbona Canziani and ask for a casket containing his genealogy, but not to reveal what he learned before winning the support of his fellow patriots on his own merit. After cremating his father on the site "sacred to the manes of Grecian liberty and Greek valour," Osmyn travelled to Russia, where Limbona commanded an Imperial regiment. The fugitive was warmly received and offered a commission, but he did not want to commit himself to the

service of Russia. However, he stayed on as pupil and advisor to Limbona, a figure modelled on Prince Alexander Ypsilantis. The Greek expatriate, a member of the leading Phanariot family, was serving as a general in the armies of the Tsar when Owenson was writing the novel.

When rumours of a war between Russia and Turkey arose, Osmyn volunteered to distribute pro-Russian propaganda in Athens, where he arrived only hours before his arrest. Out of respect for his father's wishes, he did not disclose his identity, but the daiko was convinced of his worth and adopted him as his spiritual son under a provision of Turkish law. Subsequently, some aspects of the relationship of Alcibiades and Socrates were revived in modern form when the philosopher attempted to instil reason and prudence in his bold but intemperate charge.

Convinced that the situation of Greece could only be changed by force, Osmyn invoked the glorious achievements of the Greeks in the Persian War to support his position. The sage, on the other hand, argued that insurrection normally increases the misery of the oppressed, that the desire for glory is essentially selfish, and that heroic reputations are usually obtained at the expense of the general population. He claimed that no action should be taken without the full support of the people, and that "prudence, time and caution" are the means of positive social change. When Osmyn castigated the apathy of his countrymen and lamented that "the genius of Plato and Demosthenes, the spirit of patriotism and freedom, is no more," the philosopher insisted that the genius and virtue of a nation depend on its government. Summing up

his argument, he declared that "[t]he natural man is still the same in Greece. It is evil policy that leaves no Phydias and no Pericles in Athens" (2. 147-148).

While the daiko was preparing Osmyn for a position of responsible leadership in Greece, the aga, Achmet, was covertly pursuing Ida. An imposing man who had earned his position by military talent, he was fearless on the battlefield but afraid of his slaves and mistrustful of his social inferiors. He was not inherently cruel, but his occasional rages were deadly, and his practice of politics was treacherous and self-serving. Although he was a graduate of a Muslim university where he had gained a superficial knowledge of the Persian classics and access to important posts in the imperial administration, his mind had been corrupted by his upbringing. Thus his education did not make him virtuous or profound, but he was sophisticated enough to be bored by the "still life beauties" in his harem. When he was young he loved his wife, a subtle and fascinating Egyptian, but when she aged, she no longer interested him sexually. When Ida attracted his attention by her appearance in court, he decided to divorce the Egyptian and marry the Greek in the Orthodox Church. The scheme was politically as well as personally desirable, for he was planning to break away from the Ottoman Empire and establish himself as the independent ruler of Livadia, and he believed an alliance with an archontic family would consolidate his considerable support in the Greek community. He knew Rosemeli would be opposed on racial and religious grounds, but he also knew him to be venal and ambitious, and he believed that if Ida consented, her father would agree to the marriage. In order to observe her

more closely and assess her feelings for Osmyn, he enlisted his daughter Jumeli, who invited Ida to the harem for the celebration of a Muslim festival.

Superficially, the two had much in common, for both were young, beautiful and congenial; both had one parent who was a citizen of a contemporary imperialist power and one from a Turkish colony with an illustrious past; and both had fathers who were corrupted by the master-slave relationship. But in contrast to Ida, whose education counteracted the effects of colonialism and the status of women, Jumeli's conditioning exacerbated the effects of a corrupt environment. Her "natural passions" were inflamed by an erroneous system of "indulgence and restraint" that left her ignorant, immoral, wilful and cunning. Her only accomplishments were singing, dancing and playing the guitar, ornamental skills that equipped her for competition in the harem.

Officially, no men were admitted to the party in the harem, but disguised as a slave, Achmet circulated freely in the gathering. In this character, he questioned Ida, and was convinced that her advocacy of Osmyn had been motivated by principle rather than passion. Thus the former slave was safe for a time, and the young Greek patriots fell in love when Rosemeli went on a business trip, the aga was called away by a revolt in a neighbouring province, and Ida and her brothers moved to her uncle's country estate where Osmyn was living. The romance began at a festival of the seasons which Ida attended in the character of Irene of Byzantium, an Athenian who ruled the Orthodox Empire in her own right. Her performance in the ancient rites of Summer inspired a "reverential passion" in Osmyn, who had been meeting secretly with a

group of young Athenian patriots and canvassing the peasants to discern their political views. Although their courtship transgressed class boundaries, it was endorsed and encouraged by the daiko. But he was imperceptibly dying, and during the summer he lectured Ida on marriage and natural law to complete her education for the trials ahead and prepare her to assume his philosophic mantle.

The progress of romance was abruptly interrupted by a curt letter from Rosemeli demanding Ida's immediate return to Athens. The aga had returned to his headquarters and written the archon an anonymous letter warning him of his daughter's interest in a slave. Soon after the daiko died and left Osmyn a sizable bequest. Rosemeli inherited his property in Greece and Ida the bulk of his estate, assets in England managed by a trustee. Osmyn was proscribed for seditious activities and hunted by the aga, but he remained in the Athens area, held there by his passion for Ida. The archon would not receive him, but the couple communicated in letters transmitted in the Rosemelis' garden. Ida's professed her love and her esteem for the nameless former slave, but she refused to disobey her father. Invoking "the great chain of social compact," she rejected Osmyn's offer of marriage; yet alarmed by a response describing his loss of political commitment, she agreed to a secret meeting in a church below the Acropolis. "[I]t is patriotism with which no vice was e'er associated, that leads me to you," she wrote. "You invoke me in my country's name, and I obey the sacred invocation" (3.29).

On a mission thus construed as religious, Ida violated convention by leaving her home alone at night and proceeded to the rendezvous in an Orthodox church, where

despite their convinced secularism, the lovers were mutually impressed by the "solemn, interesting and romantic" rites of the national church. In a nearby Turkish cemetery they were ambushed by Rosemeli and Achmet, Osmyn overpowered the aga's escort and escaped, and Rosemeli hustled Ida back to her gymnaseum. There he invoked the ancient laws and customs that prevented marriage between Athenian women and slaves or infidels and implored his daughter not to contaminate the bloodlines of her family, class and society. Ida promised to respect a tradition "which still preserves the native greeks distinct and free from all impure alliance," a statement accompanied by a footnote authenticating it (3. 45). Subsequently, she wrote Osmyn a letter affirming her commitment but ending the relationship.

At that point, wounded pride and insecurity began to distort his perception of her, for he failed to consider that women "can scarcely even love with impunity" whereas men's "passion's are licensed" and their "feelings are unrestrained" (3. 69). He accused her of cowardice, snobbery and even of lust for the glamorous aga, but after a time, his misgivings about her character subsided, his love and admiration revived, and with them his energy and idealism. With a renewed sense of purpose, he turned back to the cause he had neglected since the summer festival.

Originally, the revolutionary conspirators had consisted of well-connected Athenian Hellenists motivated exclusively by national pride and love of liberty. Osmyn was invited to join them after his public tribute and later donated his inheritance from the daiko to buy weapons from the French. This gesture, together with his natural attributes, had made him the dominant member of the cell. However,

when he returned to its headquarters, a cave beneath the Acropolis, he found the membership had almost doubled in his absence. The purpose of the meeting was to decide on a plan of action, but this proved to be difficult, for the group was less cohesive than before. Some looked scornful when the original cadre addressed the putative slave as "Leader, Compatriot and Chief" and there was dissent over the nature and objectives of the organization. One speaker, a depraved-looking "Greek Turk," (a derisive popular term for a notable) claimed that Greek liberation was dependent on Russian support and advised against independent action. Osmyn responded with a stirring appeal to the past, invoking Thermopylae and Marathon to demonstrate that tyrants can be successfully opposed by a numerically inferior number of dedicated patriots. Next he rebutted the arguments of a Greek patriarch's son, a contender for leadership of the organization. When his jealous rival attempted to rally the assembly to his side by construing the struggle for independence as a religious crusade, Osmyn declared that individual and social liberty can only be achieved by religious tolerance. He ended by resigning his leadership,declaring that he would not associate with "sectarians and croisaders" [sic] but only with "men and patriots" (3.85).

The meeting dissolved into anarchy, for each of the speakers had supporters who disputed with their opponents. The uproar was silenced abruptly when the sentries rushed in and announced that an armed force led by the aga was descending the Acropolis. In the crisis, the assembly unanimously declared their support for Osmyn's leadership, at which point he announced that he was Theodorus, the grandson of the archon Limbona. Inspired by the revelation that their leader was

related to the popular hero, the conspirators rushed out of their cave and beat the janissaries back to the citadel. But when the fighting spread to the city streets, the disunity that had fragmented the underground was replicated on a general scale, and the daiko's opinion of violent revolution was vindicated.

In a night of "unequalled horror," the people of Athens divided against each other, and chaos reigned in the streets. Eventually the riot was put down by the superior organization, discipline and numbers of the Ottoman troops. Osmyn was surrounded and captured while trying to kill the aga, and most of the other subversives were butchered. In accordance with Turkish military tradition, the city was pillaged and many innocent victims were put to the sword. By daybreak, Athens was a scene of "melancholy and terrific desolation." The streets were littered with corpses, and property damage was extensive. "[T] dwellings of the opulent, closely barred up" were intact, but "those of the less fortunate, whom their party or religion proscribe[d]" were "despoiled and shattered." The meanest dwellings, "those of the unprotected and poor," were "smoking and in ashes" (III. 96). All classes of Greek society suffered in the rising, but they did not suffer equally.

The validity of the daicho's critique was also born out by the post-revolutionary situation of Achmet, Athens, and Ida. The governor's spies had infiltrated the conspiracy, but he had allowed it to mature with a view to dispatching the city's dissident element with a single blow. The success of the scheme minimised the possibility of Greek resistance to his takeover of Athens and destroyed Ida's limited power to negotiate with him legitimately. The morning after the revolt she

rushed to the Acropolis to plead for Osmyn's life, but in this instance her interview with Achmet took place in his apartment in the harem, and her intervention was motivated by private rather than public sentiment. In these circumstances her voice was silenced and she was forced to make the conventional female bargain with patriarchy. After an inarticulate and therefore ineffectual plea for mercy, she agreed to a Turkish marriage to save the rebel, who was awaiting torture and execution in the courtyard below. A palace official presented the appropriate documents and the agreement was formalised in the Ottoman manner, without ceremony. Immediately afterwards, the couple appeared at the harem window, and looking up from the midst of the guards surrounding him, Osmyn was convinced of Ida's perfidy. Vowing to renounce her forever, he was led away in chains.

Fortunately, the marriage took place on a Muslim holy day, and Achmet decided to postpone the consummation until midnight. In the interim, Jumeli released Osmyn and ran away with him, her father rushed off in pursuit, and Ida got away in the confusion. After climbing down the steep head wall of the Acropolis to avoid her pursuers, she walked miles across country to her uncle's deserted villa, where she collapsed in a coma. When she revived she learned that the aga was dead, poisoned by his ex-wife on the day of his remarriage. The assassination was commissioned by his superiors, who learned of his political ambitions and purged a number of his associates at the same time, including the official who performed the degrading Turkish marriage. The fugitives disappeared, and Athenians believed that Osmyn and Jumeli had had a long-standing secret relationship. Ida's un-Orthodox union with Achmet

was now known only to herself, and her relationship with Osmyn only to her father. Thus she resumed her life in Athens unsullied by scandal. However, she became deeply depressed when months went by with no message from Osmyn, and she concluded she had risked everything for a man who had abandoned her. She devoted herself to domestic duty and lavished her attentions on her family, but her relationship with the Englishman was a welcome break in her monotonous existence. She was not in love with him, but she was restless and unhappy when he left. However, not long afterwards her life was suddenly transformed when the imprudent archon was imprisoned and his property seized by the Turkish authorities.

Volume IV begins with the Rosemelis' escape from Athens, engineered by a mysterious black janissary whom Ida recognises as Osmyn just as his boat is pulling away from the ship that will carry her and her family to safety. He is assisted by a brave, competent and reliable peasant, Stephaniki, who exemplifies the rural working class. Along with a Greek version of the Noble Peasant, the escape sequence introduces another of the novelised travelogues that illustrate the beauty, individuality and historic drama of the colonies Owenson represented. The Rosemelis' flight through the mountains to Marathon and their voyage to Smyrna where they transship to England incorporate descriptions of sublime and picturesque alpine and maritime scenery and a description of the site of the legendary battle with the Persians.

Subsequently, the narrative relates the vicissitudes of the Rosemelis' life as refugees. Their fall down the social ladder is rapid when they reach England and find that Ida's trustee is bankrupt and they have no source of income. Rosemeli is sick and

does not speak English, so Ida takes over as head of the family. Her efforts to earn a living by embroidery are unavailing, she is forced into debt for rent and supplies, and finally obliged to move the family to a sordid attic over a public house. These hardships are intensified by culture shock and isolation; because they are poor and foreign, the Greek family is rejected by the English community. Events reach a crisis when Rosemeli enters the terminal phase of his illness and bailiffs surround his sickbed, arrest him for debt and incarcerate him in a lock-up house. Fate intervenes when Ida accidentally lands on the doorstep of the Englishman, now Lord B., who buries Rosemeli and takes over financial responsibility for his family. When Ida recovers from another of the comas that mark transitions in her life, she finds herself installed in a villa in suburban London and learns that her brothers are in an elite public school.

Her life in the suburbs is luxurious, undemanding, and superficially respectable. Her protector does not live there himself and his conduct is punctilious during his daily visits. But she feels compromised by her situation and her misgivings are verified when the period of mourning for the archon ends and she discovers that the villa is merely another form of the seraglio. Lord B. makes her a handsome offer, but marriage is still not included, and rather than live "an indolent, a mean, and ignoble existence" she abandons her haven and walks to London to apply for a job as a translator. The project becomes a nightmare when she reaches the city exhausted and dishevelled and is mistaken for a prostitute. Determined to end her life, she rushes to the bank of the Thames, but her sense of responsibility for her young brothers

preserves her from suicide. She continues on to her destination where she discovers a maternal uncle whom she has never met, a wealthy merchant who disowned her mother when she married a Greek. He has recently lost his only child, and during the next four months, Ida provides the care and attention he longs for. Thus, he leaves her his immense fortune when he dies, and she becomes a Greek version of the Countess of St. Dorval.

After laying aside part of her income for refugee relief, she purchases a mansion, furnishes it in a blend of Greek and Turkish styles, and begins to entertain. Her money, her talent, and the respectability of her mother's English family admit her to the inner circle of fashionable society, and she soon becomes the star of the London season. At the height of her success, Lord B. returns from abroad and Osmyn arrives in London at the head of a Russian diplomatic mission. Her passion for the revolutionary is revived, but he accuses her of betraying him and the cause of Greece. He declares that Jumeli arranged his escape and later abandoned him, and he equates Ida's actions with hers. Pride and indignation prohibit explanations and self-justification, and she makes no attempt to tell him the truth.

Soon after, Lord B, who has become jealous of Osmyn, proposes marriage in a letter that declares she hastaught him to discard "an unjust and vulgar prejudice, which teaches that the genius of voman militates against her duties" (4. 262). Although Ida is happy she has "restored him to nature" and convinced him that bliss and virtue are inseparable, she refuses his offer in a letter detailing the entire history of her relationship with Osmyn,including the circumstances of her marriage to Achmet.

Later that day she is resting on a balcony at a party when a troop of gypsies assembles below. With them is a slattern who performs a drunken parody of a gypsy dance. Horrified, Ida recognises Jumeli and rushes down just as the Turk collapses. Before dying in the arms of Ida and Osmyn, she describes her downward slide into ruin after abandoning Greece and her Athenian lover. The scene is followed by a reconciliation mediated by Lord B., who acts nobly and gives Ida's letter to Osmyn. The reformed libertine then leaves the country, filled with regret for losing the opportunity to form a legitimate, mutually fulfilling alliance with the Greek. On her part, Ida gladly exchanges her career as a London socialite for domesticity in St. Petersburg. When the novel ends she is "an adoring wife," an "exemplary mother" and a staunch ally in Osmyn's efforts to promote Greek independence from his base in Russia.

Through the private experience of the characters she invents, Owenson depicts the complex contemporary political scene in the Balkans. The primary stage of Greek nationalism, produced in the first instance by Rigas, Koreas and other neoclassical intelligentsia of the merchant diaspora, is exemplified by the daiko and the caloyer, who extol the intellectual and military glories of pagan antiquity and promote the rationalist systems of metropolitan Europe as the agent of state formation. Osmyn's parent also personifies the category of churchmen who despite the conservatism of their establishment, were affected by the Enlightenment and Western idealisation of the classical past, and contributed to the growth of Hellenic nationalism. The older men's effect on the rising generation represented by Ida, Osmyn, and Stamati reflects the impact of the new ideas on the Greek elites within the Empire, and Osmyn's'

history illustrates the radical political articulation of the cultural movement. His transformation from a Turkish slave to an archon is a trope of Greek history from the Ottoman conquest to the eighteenth century, a process that saw the Greeks rise from a nation of slaves to a powerful and ultimately disruptive force within the Empire.

The tale also dramatises the conflicting interests and forces at play within the movement that culminated in the War of Independence. The tension between the traditional Greek theocratic and the modern secular concept of nationality is dramatised in the dispute between Osmyn and the patriarch's son during the meeting of the revolutionary cell. Their argument represents the split between revolutionaries who looked to the liberal, republican ideals of the West and saw Athens as the national capital and those who hoped for a restoration of the Christian Byzantine Empire centred in Constantinople. The portrayal of the conspirators also depicts the category of Greek notables who were not inspired by either model of Greek identity, but hoped that a revolution against the Ottomans would increase their local authority. They wanted Greece to become a vassal of Russia, or alternatively of Britain or France, and they plotted against the Ottomans to that end. The class conflicts that disunited the struggle for independence and impeded the consolidation of the state that it produced are another bone of contention delineated in the portrait of the revolutionary cadre.[5]

As well as depicting the character of the independence movement, the novel allegorises Great Power rivalry in the Near East and comments unfavourably on British foreign policy, which supported the Ottoman regime and opposed the decolonisation of Greece in order to prevent the expansion of Russian and French

power in the Eastern Mediterranean. The peninsula and the islands of the Pelopponese were a key strategic site in the area, and by 1807 not only Ali Pasha but also Britain and France were contenders for control of the Septinsular Republic. After the renegade Turk was defeated in his attempted takeover, Britain launched an offensive aiming to wrest control of the islands from France and make the former nation-state a protectorate. Achmet's active pursuit of Ida and Lord B.'s subsequent attempt to make her his mistress are analogies of these events. The plot construes both the Turkish and British contenders as unprincipled and exploitative, forecasts a Greek 'flight' away from the Ottoman world, and demonstrates the spiritual and artistic potential of an emancipated Greece. The narrative also encodes Greek affinity for the Christian Orthodox tradition of Imperial Russia and a warning that Greece will be lost to the West if modern states fail to recognise the aspirations of Greek patriots for partnership rather than dependency in their relations with the Great Powers.

Other details of plot and character compare the the treacherous Achmet with the British authorities in 1790s Ireland. The Turk's handling of the revolutionary conspiracy in Athens is modelled on Britain's handling of the revolutionary conspiracy in Dublin, and his appropriation of Ida in the aftermath of the revolt is an allegory of the British takeover after the Irish rising. The plotting of the episode implicitly supports the opinion of many historians and contemporary observers that the government allowed and even encouraged the rebellion in Ireland to take place in order to force the merger that followed.[6] The use of analogy enabled Owenson to

make a statement that was dangerous if not impossible to publish openly in the years following the Irish insurrection.

The comparison of Oriental and Western institutions and manners was common in eighteenth-century polemical writing, which often drew on the themes and imagery of a socio-historical discourse that represented Eastern rulers as tyrannical and depraved to attack the ancien régime.[7] Mary Wollstonecraft uses the convention in A Vindication, which claims that British women exist in "Mahometan bondage," a figure animated by a long tradition of Western writing dwelling on the sensuality of Muslim tyrants and their sexual exploitation of women in their power. Owenson makes Wollstonecraft's occasional metaphor a central image of her novel to develop her critique of British foreign policy and dramatise the themes of Wollstonecraft's treatise. Through the characterisation of Jumeli, she links fashionable education in ornamental skills, dissimulation and manipulative charm to political corruption, social degeneracy, and the debasement of women. The contrast between Ida and the Turk, who is identified as a generic courtly woman by her blond hair and her name (an oriental variant of 'Julie'), reinforces Wollstonecraft's appeal for a new dispensation in which women would be trained to be men's equals rather than their dependents. Emphasis on the natural similarity of the two women underlines the importance of education and stresses the idea that patriarchal women rather than their emancipated counterparts are the real threat to society.

In reiterating A Vindication's call for the professionalisation of domestic woman, Owenson reinforced the author's attack on Rousseau, who according to

Wollstonecraft, projected his own desires onto women to perpetuate their subordination in the domestic realm. Ida's relations with Osmyn and Lord B. discredit the idea that female nature is naturally susceptible to aristocratic seduction and lower-class contamination, an assumption that justifies the intellectually crippling education Rousseau designed for Sophie, the new woman in the post-Revolutionary society he envisions in Emile.[8] The history of Owenson's new woman aims to show that Rousseau's progressive system of education should be used to train women as well as men to guarantee the hegemony of the bourgeois values and practices valorised in Emile.

As well as novelising the themes of A Vindication, Owenson rehearses some of the ideas and content in much more controversial works by and about Wollstonecraft: the uncompleted novel Maria; or,The Wrongs of Woman and Godwin's Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1798). Ida like Maria is intended to represent the experience of women as a gender, and Owenson draws on the description of Wollstonecraft's suicide attempt and other details of the Memoirs to develop the chronicle of the heroine's trials as a refugee. Ida also follows Maria in depicting women as creatures whose moral and material position is constantly jeopardised by their dependence on a sex more or less flawed by pride, ambition, sensuality and intemperance. These failings are most pronounced in Lord B. and Achmet, but they are shared by men of the heroine's own class and race. Rosemeli is responsible for Ida's plight as a refugee because his ostentatious display of wealth gives the Turks a motive to destroy him and his intrigues with the Russians give them an

excuse. Her reputation and future are also endangered by Osmyn, for his recklessness delivers her over to Achmet. Furthermore, Osmyn's liaison with the courtly Jumeli condemns Ida to a respectable form of the sterile and partial existence she leads in Lord B.'s suburban villa.

The two novels share other common grounds in their defence of female desire and their critique of the sexual double standard. Owenson repudiates Wollstonecraft's vision of avant-garde conjugality, which was completely unacceptable to her reading public, but she supports Wollstonecraft's positive view of female libido and her attack on the gender inequities of heterosexual relations.[9] Just as Maria demonstrates that women in patriarchy are more at risk than men in love relationships, Ida dramatises the hazards of the desiring woman and relates her vulnerability to the traditional economy of gender. The tale of revolution in Greece is plotted to show that the master-slave dynamic poisons sexual as well as political relationships.

To develop the idea that female sexual energy is as dynamic as male libido, Owenson draws on late eighteenth-century research in comparative religion, an inquiry that was part of the Enlightenment attack on institutional religion. Anthropologists such as Charles Dupuis and Richard Payne Knight argued that in denying the power of the feminine embodied in the goddesses and matriarchal systems of ancient religions, Christianity denies man's authentic religious instinct, which is rooted in sexuality.[10] The argument is reflected in the novel by devices that point to the continuing influence of the feminine in Western patriarchy from its inception in classical Greece. They include associating the figure of woman with mythological and

historical models of female power and foregrounding female agency in scenes that are sacralized by their contexts. Naming is another part of the scheme, for it also indicates the persistence of the female principle in patriarchy. Ida's patronymic is an anagram of the rose and the melissa, the floral emblems of Artemis, and she is the namesake of the mother of the Cretan Minos, the last royal matriarch of the matriarchal society destroyed by the founders of imperial Athens.

Ida was not only a bold restatement of Mary Wollstonecraft's arguments at a time when the author and her work were notorious; it was also an historical forecast and an intervention in the process of modern state formation. The revolutionary episode predicts the evolution of the independence movement in Greece from 1814 to 1827 with startling accuracy, particularly the nature and activities of the secret society that catalysed the war of liberation that broke out in 1821. Like Owenson's fictitious cell, the Philiki Hetairia (Society of Friends) founded in Odessa in 1814 was a primarily middle and upper class organization that was infiltrated by spies, plagued by problems of leadership, and divided by dissent over the nature of postrevolutionary society. After Kapodistrias refused an invitation to lead the Hetairists, Alexander Ypsilantis answered their call, a sequence of events anticipated in the history of Osmyn, who is implicitly connected with both men. Ypsilantis began the war by leading an insurrection in the Rumanian principalities in February 1821, an action that coincided with a revolt in the Pelopponese. The rising in Greece was also faithful to Owenson's script, for the insurgents had no well-concerted plan, the Ottoman authorities had been forewarned, and the surprising early success of the Greek

offensive was reversed by the Ottomans' response when they recovered from the first shock. After four years of brutal conflict the Turks regained control of the Pelopponese, and by 1827 they had almost crushed their opponents.

That the revolution was ultimately successful was partly the result of an intervention promoted by the publication of Ida. The turning point of the war came with the destruction of the Ottoman fleet at Navarino in 1827 by a combined British, Russian and French force, an action that marked a reversal of British and French policy, which had not previously supported the Greek cause. The change was due in part to the efforts of the philhellenists, Western advocates of Greek independence who campaigned to pressure Britain and France to intervene on the side of the Greeks. They were motivated by the conviction that the Greeks were descendants of the ancients, that the apparent degeneration of the Greek character was a product of the 'Turkish yoke,' and that with emancipation the Greeks would revert to their former illustrious state.[11]

According to C. M. Woodhouse, this view was highly uncharacteristic of British thinking before 1809, the year that Byron first arrived in Greece. Supported by the evidence of contemporary letters and travel narratives, he argues that prior to that point "there was little interest in the Greeks as people. Their connection with the classical Greeks was denied, their language was ridiculed, and even the fact that they were a Christian people under heathen rule stirred little emotion, since their Christianity was adjudged even more depraved than that of Rome."[12] Woodhouse attributes the rapid growth of romantic philhellenism after 1809 to Byron's influence,

but the poet was not well-known at the seminal moment identified by the historian nor did he publish anything on Greece until 1813. Owenson, in contrast, was already a literary celebrity, and a slashing review in the first issue of the powerful Quarterly Review made Ida a topic of public interest when it appeared on the market in December 1809. Although the author's grand design is undermined by the pretentiousness of the language, the sententiousness of the heroine, and some clumsy manipulations of plot, the work was bold, original and topical, and the publicity encouraged its sale. Thus it reached a wide audience, including Byron, who devoted two lines to Athens in Canto 73 of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and a paragraph to Ida in a footnote.[13] His remarks are ironic, but the discrepancy in the space given to text and gloss suggests that Owenson's portrait of Athens influenced his initial response to the city.

Ida was perhaps the first English novel and the author certainly one of the first popular writers in the West to advertise the inherent capability and potential of the contemporary Greeks. The narrative returns insistently to the point that the classical character has been transmitted essentially unchanged through generations degraded by colonization, an argument legitimated by references to marriage practices and customs that could be seen to have preserved the racial purity and cultural integrity of the classical community. The evidence suggests that Owenson' transmission of the Greek revival's view of a people who were despised by their potential allies was instrumental to the inauguration of Western philhellenist sentiment. Whatever its aesthetic

deficiencies, then, the novel is valuable as an example of female writing that not only recorded and critiqued but also prefigured and influenced historical events.

Notes

1. The overview of Greek history to the achievement of independence is mainly derived from John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, Modern Greece (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1968), Chapters 1 and 2. See also Gerasimos Augustinos Consciousness and History: Nationalist Critics of Greek Society 1897-1914 (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1977), pp. 1-12; Joseph Braddock, The Greek Phoenix (London: Constable, 1972), pp. 1-80; The Movement for Greek Independence 1770-1821, edited, translated and with an introduction by Richard Clog (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976), pp. xi-xxiii; P. J. Vatikiotis, Greece: A Political Essay (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1974), pp. 1-7; C.M. Woodhouse, The Story of Modern Greece (London: Faber, 1968), pp. 121-128; D. A. Zakythinos, The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence, translated and with an introduction by K. R. Johnstone (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976).

2. Sydney Owenson, Woman; or, Ida of Athens, 4 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809), p. xv.

3. Richard Clogg, The Movement for Greek Independence, pp. xv, 96. Owenson could have got a translation of the manuscript from William Gell, an archaeologist who knew Greece extremely well. According to Lionel Stevenson, Gell

gave Owenson the idea of writing about the Greek liberation movement. See Stevenson's The Wild Irish Girl, p. 108.

4. Julia Kristeva uses this term for female sexual energy in "Stabat Mater," The Female Body in Western Culture (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), rpt. in Contemporary Critical Theory, ed. Dan Latimer (San Diego: H B J, 1989), pp. 580-603. The term appears on p. 503.

5. See J. Vatikiotis, Greece: A Political Essay, pp. 5-7.

6. See Stephen Gwynn, The History of Ireland, p. 414 and J. C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, p. 269.

7. See Franco Venturi, "Oriental Despotism," Journal of the History of Ideas, 24 (Jan.-Mar., 1963), p. 133.

8. Gary Kelly, Revolutionary Feminism, p. 215.

9. In an essay on Helen Maria Williams published in 1829, Lady Morgan says in a note to the text: "There is nothing so certain, as that morality varies with times and places; and that to censure conduct without reference to the age and the nation of the individual, is substantial injustice. Helen Maria Williams came into life at a moment when the malignant influence of bad institutions on happiness, and the prevailing hypocrisy of the times, had rendered every moral principle problematical, and like her highly gifted contemporary, the author of the Rights of Woman, she fell into the common error of supposing, that whatever is opposed to wrong must be right. But though the individual should not be hastily condemned, the interests of the younger part of my own sex require that the error should be signalised. Female purity

is indispensable to social happiness. It is one of nature's own laws; and is never violated with impunity." The Book of the Boudoir, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 2. 135.

It is difficult to determine what Lady Morgan really thought about the morality of female extramarital sex. She was, for example, a good friend of Byron's married mistress, Lady Caroline Lamb, and comfortable in British and Parisian high society, in which informal sexual liaisons were common. What is clear is her belief that the average woman, without a great fortune and powerful connections, must adhere to the code of female chastity. Although she lived alone and led a frenetic social life for a few years after the publication of The Wild Irish Girl, no hint of scandal was ever attached to her.

10. Javed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 115-118, 184-185.

11. Campbell and Sherrard, Modern Greece, p. 36; P. J. Vatikiotis, Greece: A Political Essay, p. 5.

12. The Philhellenes (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), p. 10.

13. Stanza 73 in the second canto of the work refers to Athens in these lines:

> Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth!
>
> Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!

In his footnote, Byron writes:

Before I say anything about a city of which every body, traveller or not, has thought it necessary to say something, I will request Miss Owenson, when she next borrows an Athenian heroine for her four volumes, to have the goodness to marry her to somebody more of a gentleman than a "Disdar Aga" (who by the by is not an Aga), the most impolite of petty officers, the greatest patron of larceny Athens ever saw (except Lord E. [Elgin]), and the unworthy occupant of the Acropolis, on a handsome stipend of 150 piastres (eight pounds sterling), out of which he has only to pay his garrison, the most ill-equipped corps in the ill-regulated Ottoman Empire. I speak it tenderly, since I was once the cause of the husband of "Ida of Athens" nearly suffering the bastinado; and because the said "Disdar" is a turbulent husband, and beats his wife; so that I exhort and beseech Miss Owenson to sue for a separate maintenance on behalf of "Ida." Having premised thus much, on a matter of such import to the readers of romances, I may now leave Ida to mention her birthplace. The Complete Works of Lord Byron, ed. and intro., Henry Lytton Bulwer (Paris, 1835), p. 98.

Converting the Heathen: The Politics of Religion in The Missionary: An Indian Tale

In 1811 Sydney Owenson produced her most powerful critique of imperialism in The Missionary, a fictive history of Portuguese interference in the Hindu society of early seventeenth-century Kashmir. The religious issues addressed in the novel were the focus of a debate over the nature of the relationship currently being forged between Britain and India, a topic that polarised controversy over domestic reform in Britain and the role of the nation abroad. By 1810 India had became the focus of dissension over government patronage and a legal system that privileged the ancien régime and also over the principles that would determine the character of British rule in communities that were incorporated into the empire by conquest and governed without representation.[1] Thus the debate over India had important implications for Ireland, whose Catholic majority was still unrepresented a decade after the Union and still perceived as an alien race by the English population of Britain.

The debate about what form British rule in India should take was centred on the possibility and advisability of imposing British laws and institutions on societies with different and often complex cultural traditions. During the eighteenth century, agents of the East India Company won Britain an empire in India, but it was a business enterprise controlled by functionaries who believed that any interference in the social and religious life of the people would jeopardise the position and profits of their undertaking. Thus, they exercised power through Hindu and Muslim agents according

to the laws and customs of the country, limited British immigration to employees of the Company and prohibited missionary activity in their sphere of influence. However, from about 1770, corruption and financial mismanagement made Company rule increasingly controversial, and India became a major topic of parliamentary debate. The Regulating Act of 1784 gave the Crown supervisory control over the Company's activities, and from that date the government became increasingly involved in the management of Indian affairs.[2]

The transition coincided with the rapid growth of the Evangelical movement, which turned its attention to India after Charles Grant, a senior Company official in Calcutta, sent prominent Evangelicals copies of a paper he wrote in 1787. In "A Proposal for Establishing a Protestant Mission in Bengal and Behar," Grant argued that the reform and consolidation of the British administration in Bengal was contingent on the reform of Indian society on Western lines, and he advocated Company support of missionaries as the best way to bring this about.[3] In 1792 he wrote a sequel in which he attacked the Hindu character, dwelled on the monstrous ills of Hindu society, and related both to the Hindu religious system. To remedy the "internal principles of depravity" in Indian cultures and make good government possible, he declared, it would be necessary to undermine "the attachment of that people to their own modes and customs" through the propagation of Christianity.[4]

While the "Proposal" was well received by Evangelical clergy and laymen, it had no practical effect, but the follow-up, "Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain," made a strong impression on the political activist

William Wilberforce. When Grant returned from India in 1790, he and Wilberforce lobbied to have a 'Pious Clause' that would legislate Company sponsorship of missions introduced into its business charter when it came up for renewal in 1793. They failed, but from that point, the Christian reform of India became a principle cause of Wilberforce and the other members of the Clapham Sect, and Grant's view of the nature of Indian society and Britain's role in the country became widely accepted. By 1810, when Owenson began work on The Missionary, much of the political nation had come to view Britain's failure to Christianize and Westernise India as a moral outrage.[5]

Although the novel was part of a larger pattern of opposition to imperialism, its immediate purpose was to influence public opinion against opening British India to missionary activity. To oppose legislation that would increase the power of the anti-Catholic Evangelicals and make their agenda part of imperial policy, Owenson turned to the writing of Sir William Jones (1746-1794), which represented India in terms that discredited the arguments of Grant and other proponents of social intervention the country. An Oriental scholar who went to India in 1783 as a Judge of the Supreme court of Calcutta, Jones believed Britain's role in India was to sustain and renew native traditions. His publications on Indian languages, institutions, history and literature and those of his colleagues in the Asiatic Society he founded in Bengal were instrumental in professionalising Oriental studies and creating a vogue for Eastern styles and narratives in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain.[6]

Both content and point of view in the novel reflect the influence of Jones' essays,[7] and also of his nine hymns to Hindu deities. Published with prose prefaces in

the 1810 edition of his poetry, the hymns were written to introduce Western readers to Hindu mythology. The collection portrays India as the site of an extravagant fecundity and cultural wealth and suggests that the Indian way of life is valid for Indians, a belief that informs all Jones' writing on the country.[8] Owenson popularised his view of the Indian physical and cultural environment to contest the propaganda of the religious reform movement, but if his attitude of tolerance accorded with her own beliefs and served her immediate political ends, she was opposed to other aspects of his thinking, a difference of opinion that is reflected in her text.

Despite the fascination Jones felt for the Orient, he believed that innate differences in the Eastern and Western mentality had produced a superior society in western Europe, and above all in Britain. Whereas the Oriental mind is prolifically imaginative, he argued, "reason and taste are the grand prerogatives of European minds." Thus, Indians are incapable of emulating the Western scientific achievement or the rational system of self-government embodied in the British constitution.[9] Jones was no less convinced than Grant that India should be ruled by Britain, and his documentary and literary productions were part of a scheme to make Oriental systems of knowledge available to the British in order to enhance their administrative control. He was also intent on legitimising British rule in Indian terms, an agenda evident in the hymns, which invoke Hindu deities to extol the benefits of British rule and plead for its long duration [10]

Whereas Jones' celebration of Hindu gods and goddesses is a vehicle of imperialist ideology, Owenson's appropriation of Hindu mythology implies that

Britain has no legitimate role in India. In contrast to liberals such as James Mill, who saw England's transition from a trading nation to a global authority as an opportunity to conduct experiments in social engineering that would benefit both Britain and its dependencies,[11] she was opposed to imperialism in all its modes. Therefore, while she clearly preferred Jones' brand of colonialism to the Evangelical and Utilitarian models, she used her tale to represent any Western interference in the internal affairs of Eastern nations as reprehensible and dangerous.

Her opposition to the colonialist thrust of Jones' writing takes place both on the literal level and in her treatment of the signifying system that textualised the Orient for European readers. The documentary as well as the imaginative literature of eighteenth-century orientalism configured the Orient as the subordinate term in a gendered binary opposition and constructed a false dichotomy between what was construed as the abstract, imaginative Eastern and the rational, empirical Western mentality. As Edward Said points out, these strategies of representation projected a scientistic view of the East as "a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption," and thereby justified European intervention in the area.[12] At the level of subtext, then, contemporary orientalist productions subtended missionary and Evangelical writing, another growing body of literature on India.[13]

The intersection of these two apparently oppositional discourses and their complicity with an overtly imperialist fictional genre is signalised in The Missionary, which blends Jones' orientalist discourse and canonical histories of Catholic missionary activity in the East with a type of adventure story that evolved from Robinson Crusoe,

a work that John McVeagh describes as "the myth of western development cast into story form."[14] In the fiction of R. M. Ballantyne, Ryder Haggard and other practioners of the genre, the challenging environment of the colonial frontier tests the European hero's moral and physical fortitude and proves the superiority of his gender, race and culture through stock plot functions such as the importance of specialized scientific knowledge, romantic encounters with native women and descent into underground caves and passages.[15] In a relatively crude and obvious manner the conventions of the genre express the implicit and explicit assumptions of orientalist and missionary writing, a point made through irony and parody in The Missionary.

Like Robinson Crusoe, the tale dramatises a primary phase of the European history of discovery and colonization, but in contrast to the earlier work, it represents the erosion rather than the expansion of European power through efforts to Westernise native people. The temporal setting is the period of Portuguese history known as "the Sixty Years Captivity," when the nation was ruled by Spain and its status as a global power was permanently undermined. The loss of autonomy resulted from the decay of the Aviz dynasty, the first Portuguese monarchs with a distinctively national rather than a feudal character. Under their leadership, Portugal became a sixteenth-century forerunner of early nineteenth-century Britain, an aggressive maritime state with an expanding overseas empire. But the direct line died out and a period of national decline began after King Sebastian (1554-78) reversed the policy of his grandfather, who had withdrawn the majority of Portuguese garrisons from North Africa to terminate Portugal's costly wars with the Moors. Motivated primarily by

religious fervour, Sebastian led an expeditionary force to Africa in 1578, an action which resulted in the destruction of his army and his own death. There was no surviving Aviz prince except for an infirm cardinal whose death in 1580 terminated the direct line.[16]

Owenson begins the tale with a summary of the ensuing political struggle for the Portuguese throne. There were five major contestants who were closely related to the House of Aviz, and less substantial claims were also put forward by Catherine de Medici and Pope Gregory XIII. Ultimately, Philip II of Spain and the Duchess of Braganza became the main contenders. The influential university of Coimbra declared for the Portuguese House of Braganza, but the Pope and the Society of Jesus supported the Hapsburg candidate, and in 1581 Portugal and Spain were united under Philip II. In theory the agreement made the two nations equal partners in the union, but few of the promises made in 1581 were kept during the Spanish interregnum. The Portuguese Cortes were summoned only once during the period, and Spanish foreign policy precipitated the decline of the Portuguese empire. Thus, as Owenson observes in her overview of events with obvious correspondences to current affairs in Ireland, "the national independence of a brave people faded gradually away and Portugal, wholly losing its rank in the scale of nations, sunk into a Spanish province."[17]

Because the Portuguese were not apathetic in bondage, the era represented in the text was domestically turbulent. The Church and the nobility were politically divided and the country was torn by aristocratic feuds, urban insurrections and dissension between the Jesuits who supported the Spanish monarchy and the

Franciscans who opposed it. The sociopolitical scene had a parallel in contemporary Portugal, where as Owenson was writing, nationalist guerrillas were harassing the French army of occupation and undermining Bonaparte's control of the Iberian Peninsula. The country's fierce resistance to the Continental System created a strong pro-Portuguese sentiment in Britain that Owenson, with her instinct for what was marketable, doubtless considered when she conceived the novel.

The narrative introduced by the historical overview fuses analogues of the histories of St. Hilarion, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis Xavier, all of whom were missionaries in the East. The story begins in 1620 when a ten-year-old orphan, Hilarion Count d'Acugna, is sent for safe-keeping to his family's gothic fortress in the Portuguese hinterland. The child is at risk because his mother was a Braganza and his elder brother and uncle are prominent leaders of the nation's anti-Spanish faction. His preceptor and only companion is an elderly Franciscan friar, a member of a famous monastery of the order located in close proximity to the Acugna family seat on the slope of the mountains descending to the southern coast. A labyrinth excavated from a pile of rocks at the base of a mountain, the monastery is situated by a lake that roars incessantly even when its surface is still. Thus, the religious house is the destination of pilgrims who believe the purchase of its waters will bring them health and salvation. To the east of the monastery remnants of a Roman fortress are still visible; to the south lies the ocean and "the coast of Carthage," evoking memories of " the altar of Hannibal" and "the victor standard of Scipio Africanus" (1. 7).

Together with the unmitigated influence of his tutor/guardian, this environment shapes Hilarion into a visionary idealist who is haunted by dreams of religious glory. When he is eighteen he renounces his wealth and rank and joins the religious community in the nearby monastery, where he evolves into a species of Olympian Supermonk, a figure of "Herculean" physical, intellectual and moral stature (1.40). The lesser beings (everyone else) in his sphere are amazed by his ability to transcend normal physical limits in the practice of the rigorous rule of the order, awed by his mystical visions, hypnotised by his eloquence and impressed by the extremes of his charity and the lustre of his pedigree. The monks conclude that he is a reincarnation of Francis of Assisi, who was revered as 'the second Christ' and styled 'the man without a fault.' Before long Hilarion's reputation spreads, and he becomes a regional celebrity and demigod.

At the beginning of his career he is congenial and unassuming, but as he grows older, his personality undergoes a change. More or less inevitably under the circumstances, he decides his world is right in its estimate of him, and he becomes introverted and haughty. Meanwhile, his enthusiasm for conventual life withers from lack of challenge and stimulation, and by twenty-six he is severely depressed. Desperate to recapture the raptures that once enlivened his "torpid life," he steps up his regime of prayer and penance until he is deranged (1.17). The monks interpret his symptoms as a mark of divine grace, and soon convent gossip has it that he will perform a miracle which will make their house famous, speculation that penetrates Hilarion's self-induced narcosis. After dwelling obsessively on the matter for a time, a

vision convinces him that God has directed him to become a missionary in the East, and he is revitalized by a renewed sense of purpose. In this mood he is irresistibly persuasive, and he soon convinces the secular and religious authorities to underwrite a personal missionary crusade in India.

The fictive narrative of Hilarion's missionary endeavours is an adaptation of the history constructed in official Catholic biographies of Francis Xavier, who was canonised in 1621 and made the patron saint of missions for his work in India. Seventeenth-century Catholic historians attributed miraculous powers to the Spanish Jesuit and credited him with mass conversions in Travancore during the two years he spent in the area. Owenson construes their claims as preposterous (a view supported by modern scholarship)[18] and rewrites Xavier's history in a way that condemns such initiatives and promotes the Jonesian view that Hinduism is a sophisticated religious system and a way of life that is fundamentally resistant to change by foreign influences.

The revision begins when Hilarion, like his historical counterpart Xavier, is appointed Papal Nuncio to the Indies and embarks for Goa, the administrative centre of Portugal's Eastern empire. The Franciscan's conduct on the voyage is an exaggerated version of the type of heroism ascribed to the Jesuit, who reputedly made superhuman efforts to care for lower-class sailors and immigrants, many of whom died from conditions on the 'coffin ships' that carried them East. When Hilarion's ship arrives in Goa, his reputation has preceded him and a great multitude meets him at the harbour, a scene that parodies official accounts of Xavier's arrival in the colony. In a procession that evokes Christ's entry into Jerusalem, he parades through the city,

originally a Franciscan sphere of influence but a centre of Jesuit power after Xavier made it the headquarters of a vast missionary enterprise in the 1540s. At the portal of the monastery that will house him, he turns and blesses the crowd before the doors close on him and his honour guard of monks, a gesture that elicits a rapturous response from the populace, who view him as a deity.

The description of Hilarion's brief sojourn in Goa continues the subtle burlesque of Xavier's history and establishes unspoken parallels between the Portuguese possession and Ireland, both islands that were colonised and recolonised as a result of power shifts within the invading state. The Portuguese aristocrat and the religious organization he represents are tacitly compared to the Old English gentry and the Catholic Church in post-Cromwellian Ireland. The narrator notes that all the important posts in Goa's civil and ecclesiastical administration are held by Spaniards who are hostile to Hilarion and the Franciscans, and he in turn is disgusted by their luxury and their aspersions on his order. Nevertheless, the few months he spends in Goa are rewarding, for in accordance with Catholic accounts of Xavier at a similar point in his life, Hilarion is brilliantly successful as a preacher and acquires a large following in the European community. When he embarks on his venture, the majority of the city's Portuguese population accompanies him to the harbour.

Elated by the tribute, he takes ship and sails up the coast to the mouth of the Indus, for in contrast to Xavier, who laboured on the southern tip of India, Hilarion has decided to focus his endeavours on Kashmir, the northern extremity of the country. This is a bold and ambitious enterprise, for European civilisation has not yet

influenced the remote and little-known province. Moreover, it is a bastion of the native religion, revered by Hindus as the birthplace of Brahma and the earthly model of Indra, or paradise. But despite these obstacles and the fact that Hinduism is immensely old and resistant to change, Hilarion is eager for the challenge and confident in his ability to prevail.

At Tatta, he transfers to a galley and proceeds upriver to Lahore, located on a tributary of the Indus. A narrative gloss calls attention to the historic importance of the river "which first opened to the conqueror of Asia [Alexander] a glimpse of those climes which have since been so intimately connected with the interests of Europe, which have so materially contributed to the wealth and luxury of modern states, and so obviously influenced the manners and habits of western nations" (1. 53-4). Alexander's influence did not last long after his retreat from India, and the riverbank bears no traces of his brief occupation. But while Hilarion passes by "Hindu villages," "a Mogul fortress," "a Rajah castle," and "the minarets of a mosque," everything he sees reminds him of the Macedonian, and he is thrilled by every site "where Alexander fought, where Alexander conquered!" (1. 59). The filtered, indirect speech articulates the traditional European idea that the region of India invaded by Alexander is a Western sphere of influence, but by superimposing this perspective on a landscape imprinted with emblems of Hindu and Muslim domination, the author satirises the assumption and introduces a double perspective of India that is sustained until the missionary's own conversion in the conclusion of the narrative.

When he arrives at Lahore in the Punjab, Hilarion undertakes a course of study that is meant to enable his spiritual conquest of India but proves to be a first step towards a modern version of Alexander's catastrophic experience in the country. He prepares for his mission with cultural studies that include an immersion course in Sanskrit, Hinduism's sacred language, and another in Hindustani, its major dialect. Similar to William Jones when he came to India, the missionary is instructed by a pundit (an expert in Sanskrit, philosophy and jurisprudence) who is both supportive and misleading.[19] Hilarion's pundit subscribes to an unorthodox materialist branch of Hindu philosophy and he is contemptuous of all formal religions, but he admires his pupil and becomes his mentor as well as his teacher.

In keeping with his character as a romance hero, Hilarion is an outstanding linguist, so in several months he is fluent in Hindustani and begins to preach impromptu sermons in public venues in the city. He finds Hindu society very tolerant, but his efforts to alter it are completely unsuccessful, for his small audiences are comprised entirely of the powerless lower castes. Even they are unimpressed, for despite his command of the language, they do not understand his doctrines. His attempts to make contact with Brahmins are unavailing, and the pundit tells him his experience is normal, for they avoid Europeans and other foreigners. Typically, he claims, the Brahmins live austere and secluded lives devoted to the practice of religious discipline, the study of logic and metaphysics, and the cultivation of literature. Occasionally, however, religious leaders make public appearances in lavish religious

pageants, a custom that finally enables Hilarion to make contact with the Hindu establishment.

In a national newspaper published by the court of Delhi, a publication whose historical status is verified by a footnote that contests the myth of India's technological backwardness, the pundit learns that a famous Kashmiri Brahmin and his granddaughter, a brachmachira (ascetic) with a national reputation for piety and prophecy, will visit Lahore. The holy man and his descendant, who are regarded by Hindus as gods on earth, will preside over a theological debate following the guru's performance of the ceremony of Upaseyda, or 'second birth,' an initiation equivalent to the Christian rite of confirmation. The pundit explains that the forum is a prime opportunity to win a reputation as a theologian, and because it is non-sectarian, Hilarion can participate if he undergoes purification in the consecrated tanks of the temple and adopts Indian dress. The missionary is elated, and after a conversation that points to the similarities between Vedantic monism and the Platonic metaphysics espoused by the Franciscans, he spends the night in meditation preparing for his trial.

A crucial episode in Hilarion's life begins with the arrival of the guru, Rah-Singh, and his grand-daughter, Luxima, in a native version of the pageant that celebrated his arrival in Goa. A huge crowd assembles to welcome the pair, who enter the city in a procession featuring prancing Arabian steeds, an elephant caparisoned in gold and voluptuous dancing girls. The centrepiece of the parade is the litter carrying Luxima, who is tantalisingly veiled by sheer gauze draperies and surrounded by a corps of female pilgrims. The noisy onlookers fall silent and draw back as she passes, a

movement testifying to her moral authority in Hindu society. Following the litter is a squad of native troops, a descriptive element that signifies the political importance of the hieratic figure.

When the guru and his entourage disappear into the temple of Krishna, the missionary retires to his spartan camp on the edge of the forest. He is filled with "horror and disgust" by the spectacle, for "[t]he music, the perfumes, the women, the luxury and the splendour" have had a predictable effect on the young man (1.80). For a moment he is overwhelmed by the spiritual perils of his enterprise, but he ignores the premonition and waits impatiently for the pundit, who will introduce him to the temple.

Shortly before noon, he and his sponsor proceed to a tank outside the temple, where he is purified before dressing in a white jama. After his symbolic baptism, he enters the temple, where he finds a congregation whose focal point is the most exalted representatives of his new world. Rah-singh and Luxima are isolated in a sacred space corresponding to the chancel of a cathedral, where the guru is positioned on an elevated cushion and his granddaughter sits at his feet telling the beads of the muntras (rosary) wound around her wrist. She is a brunette beauty whose caste mark and sacred thread denote her sect and status as 'twice born'; he is a pontifical figure whose pose and expression create an image of deity incarnate. Also foregrounded are two groups positioned outside the gold and ebony railing that sets the hierarchs apart from the remainder of the assembly: the pilgrim women who sit outside the railing fanning the air with peacock feathers and the theologians who are grouped on either side of the

room. The remainder of the chamber is filled by an audience of pilgrims, fakirs, and the upper castes of Lahore. The assembly is a hierograph of the social world that Hilarion aspires to reform, but his appearance there marks his transition to an alternative world view. Symbolically, the event marks his formal induction into Hindu society and his 'second birth' as a type of Hindu priest.

The forum is well under way when he arrives, and he is the last to speak. The narrator remarks that the doctrines expounded are diverse, but each is a version of Platonic philosophy, "the wreck of that abstract learning, which, too little connected with the true happiness of society," originated in India before travelling to Greece and Europe (1.88). However, if the matter of debate is familiar to Western ears, the tone is distinctive, for the participants are content to present their own positions rather than controvert others. Hilarion's discourse, in contrast, is inflamed by the desire to dominate and convince. His posture violates institutional decorum, but his style and appearance impress some of the audience and command the attention of all. However, the effect is transient, "for their hearts and their imaginations" are governed by the fear of losing caste (1.92). When the guru winds up the colloquium with a brief address, the Christian is forgotten, the procession is reformed, and the holy man and his entourage exit, leaving Hilarion alone in the temple. Unlike Christ and Xavier, who reputedly triumphed in similar situations, the priest is rejected by the sages of the temple. Indian society, it seems, is uniformly unaffected by the charisma that made him a celebrity in Portugal and Goa.

At this point Hilarion's enterprise seems doomed, but the pundit suggests a new plan of attack. Motivated by a perverse desire to test the chastity of two perfect human specimens in their prime, he claims that Hilarion's performance deeply affected Luxima. He explains that women play an important role in the religions of the East, either as priestesses or victims, and that Luxima's wealth, lineage, piety, charity and beauty have inspired the homage of all classes of Hindu society. Thus, if she converted, many others would follow her example. He adds that although it is normally impossible to meet an upper-class Indian woman, the brachmachira's role has a public dimension. Each morning and evening she worships on the banks of consecrated rivers, and during the performance of this duty, any not bound by the rules of caste can approach her.

Luxima's power is demonstrated in the next scene, a religious pageant in honour of Durga, the goddess of Nature. At sunrise on the feast day another exotic procession files past Hilarion's tent into the forest, and the priest follows in its wake to the shrine of Camdeo, the god of love. Here Luxima is officiating at his worship and the congregation is prostrate at her feet, importuning her intercession with the divinity. Invoking her gift of prophecy, the votarists clamour for her blessing and guidance, and she becomes "the victim of her own imposition" (1.113). Stimulated by the atmosphere, her "imagination" becomes "disordered" and she believes herself inspired. Her eloquence, intensity and beauty induce a frenzy of enthusiasm in her followers and horrified indignation in the missionary. Blind to the similarities

between this spectacle and his own effect on the Portuguese, he "shudder[s] to reflect on the weakness and frailty of man" (1.115).

However, the episode convinces him that the pundit is correct, and he begins to plan the campaign that will transform the "Heathen Priestess" into a "Christian Nun." He familiarises himself with her history, learning from the pundit that she was a child bride who was widowed before the marriage was consummated. Although eager to join the body of her noble young husband on the funeral pyre, she responded to the pleas of her grandfather and instead became a consecrated vestal, an option available to a woman of her class and circumstances. In Hilarion's remaining weeks in Lahore, her image becomes fused with his religious ambitions, and she begins to dominate his imagination even in prayer. When his mastery of Hindu, Sanskrit and Kashmiri geography is complete, he sets off in pursuit of his quarry, who left Lahore for Kashmir immediately after the festival.

Like Francis Xavier during his years in Southern India, the hunter of souls travels alone and on foot, living meagerly off the land. He makes constant attempts to win converts, but although he shares Xavier's hardships, determination and eloquence, he does not enjoy the success attributed to the Saint. Whereas the Spaniard allegedly made mass conversions and founded dozens of Christian settlements in a mere two years, Hilarion finds that rural Hindus are as resistant to conversion as their urban counterparts. He comes to see that human opinion is generally irrational and to apprehend the difficulty of eradicating ideas that are socially ingrained. However, his new understanding of the power of tradition is limited, for if his position as an

outsider enables him to analyze Indian society, it does not make him self-aware. Thus, while the narrator observes that Hilarion's reflections are "equally applicable to human character in the West and East," the Christian is "struck by the imbecility of those who submitted their reason to the tyranny of a baseless illusion" (1.122-230). He does not perceive that his own behaviour and beliefs are shaped by the same type of irrational dogmas and social conditioning that he condemns in Hindus.

His intolerance is an impediment, for although his dynamic personality and imposing appearance inspire considerable interest and admiration in the native population, they are indignant when he attacks their religion. He prays for the ability to perform miracles: "to convert. . . through the medium of astonishment" a civilisation indifferent to Christianity, but the power attributed to Francis Xavier is denied him. Although he can "pray with the saint, and suffer with the saint, . . overwhelm by his eloquence, command by his dignity, attach by his address, and awe by his example," he cannot "subvert a single law of nature" (1.126-27). When he finally reaches the Bimbhar pass, the gateway to Kashmir, he has not yet made a single convert in India.

To represent Hilarion's encounter with the quintessential East represented by Luxima and the Vale of Kashmir, Owenson mobilises a series of conventional European tropes for ingressing areas slated for colonization. They comprise a sequence depicting an aerial survey of the target, effortless penetration of the 'virgin' territory, and an encounter establishing a binary relationship between coloniser and colonised.[20] Owenson devises a parodic repetition of the formula, exaggerating its stock images and

highlighting its erotic content as part of an attempt to expose and interrogate the system of figuration that underwrote the act of colonisation.

The sequence begins with a stereotypical image of the religious conquistador, an Olympian view of Hilarion leaning on his crozier at the summit of the pass gazing down at the realm he plans to invade. Stimulated by his first sight of the fertile valley "confined within the majestic girdle of the Indian Caucasus," he descends rapidly into its lush environment (1.130). The ground-cover, a springy native grass, eases his progress; "the golden fruit of the assoca-tree" provides nourishment; and "countless streams of liquid silver" quench his thirst. At twilight, when he reaches the valley floor, he is tranquillised by a novel feeling of sensuous pleasure, and "[t]hrowing himself on the odorous mass" of vegetation, he sinks into a profound sleep. Revitalized and by now convinced that the success of his mission depends on the conversion of Luxima, he rises at dawn and moves quickly down the valley towards Sirinagar, where the Guru presides over a theological college. A few leagues from the capital, he finds a scenic glen containing a cave hung with stalactites and decides to make it his headquarters. He builds an altar, surmounts it with his crucifix, then sleeps soundly on a couch of moss and leaves. He wakes to see the suns's rays shining on his golden cross and prostrates himself "before the first shrine ever raised to his Redeemer, in the most distant and idolatrous of the provinces of Hindostaan" (1.143-44).

The imagery of invasion culminates in a meeting of East and West in the next episode, which begins when Hilarion sets off purposefully for the city but feels compelled to investigate a grove of mangoostin trees. Leaving the highway, he starts

down an overgrown path towards the centre of the plantation. "[W]edded, in their towering branches, above his head, and knitted, in their spreading boughs, beneath his feet," the trees gradually efface the trail (1.145). The sound of a waterfall guides him through the "leafy labyrinth" until he emerges at the confluence of the Behat and a branch of the Indus. Here he finds a shrine occupied by a woman intoning a prayer to the water and the rising sun. He is dazzled by the luminous figure and watches silently while she worships. When he shifts his position slightly, he suddenly recognises Luxima. Startled from her reverie by the rustle of his robe, she turns and faces him and the two stand transfixed,

> [s]ilently gazing, in wonder, upon each other; she, like the East, lovely and luxuriant; he, like the West, lofty and commanding: the one, radiant in all the lustre, attractive in all the softness which distinguishes her native regions; the other, towering in all the energy, imposing in all the vigour, which marks his ruder latitudes: she, looking like a creature formed to feel and to submit; he, like a being created to resist and to command: while both appeared as the ministers and representatives of the two most powerful religions of the earth; the one no less enthusiastic in her brilliant errors, than the other confident in his immutable truth. (1.149-50)

After invoking and exaggerating the clichés of Western cultural stereotyping in her rendition of the colonial encounter, Owenson systematically deconstructs them, a

process that continues to the conclusion of the tale. A train of events that illustrates the power and dynamism of the Other begins when Luxima's amazement changes to anger, she leaves abruptly in silent disdain, and the missionary gazes after her until he falls into a trance, a state he normally induces by meditation. When he recovers, he investigates the shrine and finds a wreath of flowers lying before it. He associates the chapelet with idolatry but also with the priestess, and in violation of his principles if not his instincts, he salvages it from the mud and abandons his plan to visit Sirinagar. Instead, he returns directly to his camp, hangs the wreath on an outcrop of the grotto, and spends the rest of the day mooning over the incident. His first unmediated encounter with the spirit of India has weakened his will and subverted his purpose, an effect that is magnified in every subsequent confrontation. The psychological significance of the meeting is rendered in the symbolism of the wreath, a metonym of Luxima, and the cave, which is Hilarion's church and a metaphor of his inner self. His intrusion into Luxima's sacred precincts leads to hers into his and his own spiritual environment is immediately altered, destabilising a psychic equilibrium secured by undivided allegiance to Christ.

The next scene introduces Luxima's habitat, a Manichean opposite of the masculinised imperialist landscape that shaped Hilarion's world view. After his day of meditation, he returns to the shrine and wanders through the grove until he finds himself in a microcosm of the Vale of Kashmir, a small valley almost surrounded by hills. At the far end is a narrow gully opening towards the mountains of Sirinagar; in the centre is "a sloping mound" nearly surrounded by two branches of a stream.

Through the thick growth of flowering shrubs covering the hillock, the "shafts of a veranda" are partially visible, although the building it attaches is concealed by vegetation (1.159). Mesmerised by the sensual landscape of the valley, Hilarion watches while the sun sets on the inland delta. His growing conviction that he has discovered Luxima's headquarters is confirmed when he sees her emerge from the mound and descend towards the shrine on the riverbank. He watches while she performs "the vesper worship of her religion," her face and figure irradiated by the glow of the sun's last rays. Suddenly animated by a fervour as ardent as hers, Hilarion darts from his place of concealment, seizes the arm raised in homage to the sun, and accuses her of heathen pantheism. She is outraged by the assault and commands him to leave, but a dialogue is nevertheless established in which she reveals that his performance in Lahore deeply affected her. She addresses him as the "daring infidel" who denied the existence of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and accuses him of impersonating the sixth avatar of Vishnu to suborn Hindus.

After denouncing the priest as a dangerous sorcerer, Luxima leaves the shrine, and he perceives that to her, he is ignorant and profane. Nevertheless, he returns to the cave elated, for his experience rehearses the saga of European conquest and colonization in the previous century. Like Cortez and Pizarro he has reached his goal through outstanding courage and determination, and a native leader has mistaken him for a god. He is now convinced his mission will succeed, an impression fortified by the lack of native opposition to his presence. His situation is more precarious than he realises, but at this point, his intrusion into forbidden territory poses a moral rather

than a physical threat. Luxima's proximity is so distracting and her environment so seductive that he exists in a state of self-imposed bondage. He cannot force himself to leave the area long enough to evangelise the population of Sirinagar and its environs. The locals, who admire holy men of any denomination, supply him with food and call him "The Hermit of the Grotto of Congelations" after the name of his cave. The name denotes a new identity deriving from his transplantation in the geocultural environment personified by the brachmachira.

Three days after their first conversation, a prodigious feat of strength and courage establishes the Western hero on terms of intimacy with the native object of desire, a plot device generic to the imperialist romance. When he pays a stealthy visit to her shrine, Hilarion finds a beautiful fawn, wearing a collar inscribed 'Luxima,' in the clutches of a wolf. After strangling the predator with his bare hands, he takes the fawn home and tends its injuries. He is on his knees intent on this task when a shadow falls over the mouth of the cave. Turning his head, he sees Luxima backlit by the setting sun. Searching for her lost pet, she discovered his tracks near the corpse of the wolf and followed a trail of blood to the missionary's sanctuary. She is dazzled by the grotto, which resembles a miniature cathedral in its configuration and lighting, and impressed by the imposing figure of its occupant, who is wearing the robe of a Hindu priest. Thus she joins Hilarion before the altar, kneeling on the other side of the fawn. Cradling the animal's head in her arms, she falls into a reverie, which ends abruptly when she notices the breast of Hilarion's robe is covered with blood. Moved by the ambience of the cave and his tenderness to the animal, she overcomes her prejudice

against physical contact and binds his wound. The scene fuses the imagery of Christ's martyrdom and that of the death of Krishna, who was shot by a deer hunter, to foreshadow the consequences of Hilarion's pursuit of the Hindu vestal. Both the hunter and his prey will become sacrificial victims in an Oriental reenactment of the Christian Passion.

When Luxima has completed her task, Hilarion escorts her back to the valley, then loiters there until nightfall. When he hears music coming from the mound, he mounts to the summit, where water gushes from a spring. A light is beaming through a lattice of Luxima's pavilion, and Hilarion has "no difficulty in penetrating with his eye into the interior of the room" where Luxima is kneeling before a small, flower-strewn altar, playing on a lyre and singing to a Cupid-like image of Camdeo (1.198). She offers incense, passionately intones a prayer for union with her beloved, then falls into an ecstatic trance. Hilarion is jealous and angry until he remembers that in India, religious fervour is sometimes expressed in terms of sexual love, and his anxiety subsides.

As the imagery suggests, their first physical contact has made Hilarion into Luxima's lover, and in future meetings he abandons his homilies for the language of courtship, ostensibly to win her for Christ. To establish an intimacy that will make her more susceptible to indoctrination he engages her in discussions about her personal life, but in appealing to her normal human emotions, his own are activated. Thus, while wooing Luxima with the language of sentiment, his own sensibility is altered, and his devotion to the Christian Lord modulates to a passionate obsession with the

priestess of Camdeo, a fixation generated by the libidinal energy of frustrated sexual desire.

Because he rationalises his passion by interpreting it as religious ardour, his determination to make Luxima a Christian nun grows with his attachment. He calls her "Daughter," and styles himself "Father," terms signifying the affective mode and the political economy of the relationship he envisions. Given her status as a Brahmin and a divinity she is initially astonished by his attitude of benevolent paternalism. Nevertheless, she accepts his terms, for she does not understand their significance. The narrator remarks that as Luxima's own religion "unites the most boundless toleration to the most obstinate faith; the most perfect indifference to proselytism, to the most unvanquishable conviction of its own supreme excellence," she receives his prayers for her conversion as a version of the Hindu's supplications for her happiness and well-being.

The contrast between Hinduism's' toleration of difference and Christianity's narrow sectarianism is highlighted in a dispute over devotional practices. Whereas Hilarion is hypercritical of Luxima's daily homage to the sun, she approves his forms of worship but refuses to abandon her own. In a fit of pique he accuses her of idolatry, clearly blind to the similarities between Luxima's type of piety and Francis of Assisi's. Ironically, she uses the substance of the Saint's most famous lyric, "Canticle of Brother Sun," to defend her practice. She describes the solar body as "the emblem" of divine light, and explains that she adores God in his works, but not in his essence, which is immaterial.[21] When Hilarion claims that baptism enables Christians to contemplate

"the Creator in himself," she is shocked, calling the desire to image Deity sacrilegious. The argument works to construe the heathen priestess as a more sophisticated theologian than the Christian priest.

When Luxima proves impervious to his arguments and dangerously articulate in defence of her own faith, Hilarion gives her a copy of the Scriptures he has made in Sanskrit. He realises that the forms personifying Deity in her national religion influence "all the habits, feelings, and the expressions of her life," but he believes the revealed word of God and her innate spirituality will overcome "prejudices" and "errors" that are, in fact, exact counterparts of his own (1.227).

A visit from the guru forces the couple to forego their daily meetings and during this period, Hilarion is restless and unhappy. Finally, he forces himself to go to Sirinagar to seek out other converts. On the outskirts of the city, he spots a large force of Mughal warriors descending a nearby mountain. Investigation reveals that they are troops of Prince Solyman Sheko, who is fighting against his uncle Aurangzeb in defence of his father Dara, the regent of the Islamic empire centred in Delhi. When he learns that the army will encamp in the neighbourhood, the priest is extremely upset. He immediately abandons his plan to preach in the capital and rushes back to the grove. After an uneventful reconnaissance of Luxima's precincts, he returns to the grotto and finds the priestess asleep on the steps of the altar, her body marbled by the moonlight shining through a fissure in the cave's roof. Hilarion crosses himself and invokes his patron saint, convinced for a moment that she is divine. The impression passes but he is enthralled by the beauty of the human woman, and when she suddenly

wakes, he calls her by name for the first time. Declaring that she has come to return his "Shaster"(scriptures) she hands him his translation of the Bible. When she calls it a "wondrous book," worthy to be ranked with the Vedas, he is too agitated to contradict her (2.26).

After this incident, he struggles against the feeling that the renunciation of earthly love is contrary to the design of Providence. Each day he is distraught and depressed until sunset, when he meets Luxima and works for her conversion. He makes some progress, but perceives that her partial acceptance of Christianity is not the result of conviction but rather of her attachment to him. Furthermore, she refuses to abandon her own forms of worship or publicly profess herself Christian, contending that such a step would make her an outcaste, a state worse than death. And her conversion is not unilateral, for as Hilarion proselytises Luxima, he is reciprocally influenced by her religion and culture. To soothe the nervous tension which becomes habitual to her, he encourages the Indian to speak of the dogmas of her religion and of the institutions and manners of her country. Her brilliant discussion of these subjects increases her appeal, and Luxima and the nation she represents insidiously change his personality. As the project of conversion progresses, the identity of the agent himself is metamorphosised.

Hilarion's Indianization is demonstrated when a stranger on horseback rides into the sacred space around the shrine, where the priest now spends most of his time. Outraged by the intrusion, he bursts from his place of concealment like the "guardian spirit" of the sanctuary and chases the encroacher away. His pursuit is unsuccessful,

but he concludes the interloper was Solyman. The mental torment resulting from the conviction that Luxima is involved with the Muslim forces him to recognise the real nature of his feelings; and the man once renowned for his self-possession spends the night in an agony of remorse, fear, jealousy and desire. When dawn marks the end of his Gethsemane, he resolves to leave the area immediately, but he cannot force himself to act on the decision. At sunset he returns to the shrine and waits until Luxima, still wearing her priestly vestments, arrives from a religious service in the temple where she officiates. From his hiding place behind a tree Hilarion observes her look of anticipation, and thrilled by its significance, he prays for the strength to resist her. At that moment Solyman rises from a clump of bushes, prostrates himself at her feet, and forces her to listen to a story that compares and contrasts with the missionary's history.

Intrigued by Luxima's reputation, the Prince had visited a Hindu temple and observed her in a religious ceremony. He was captivated by her beauty and distinction and immediately resolved to win her. Duty and ambition intervened, but as soon as his mission brought him to Sirinagar, he sought out her retreat and discovered the shrine. His goes on to describe the "prying Brahmin" he encountered there and the reason for his flight: because he was afraid of compromising a vestal, he allowed himself to be driven from the grove. He ends his recital with an offer of marriage and lifelong devotion to his "idol's service" (2.124-25). Luxima is clearly upset by the proposal but interpreting her silence as consent, Solyman clasps her arm. When she tries to pull away, Hilarion rushes forward and attacks him. In the confrontation that

follows, the Prince discerns that the priest is his rival, and invoking the social consequences of her attachment to an insignificant Christian, he offers Luxima the throne of India to switch her allegiance to him. When she refuses, he is bitter and sardonic, but his aristocratic demeanour is unaltered by the rebuff. He offers his help if Hilarion's "imprudence" makes her the target of Brahminical rage, then mounts his horse and rides proudly away.

Solyman's departure is followed by a scene marking the physical climax of the love affair, but in contrast to the conventional plot of imperialist romance, the romantic interlude demonstrates the authority and inviolability of the native subject. After mutual confessions of love, Hilarion tells Luxima his "redemption" is dependent on her, then collapses, overwhelmed by stress and lack of sleep. While cradling his head in her lap, she sees a face in the tree above, and convinced that Brahma has miraculously appeared to rescue her from social and spiritual disaster, she reverts to her former character of Hindu hierarch and commands the priest to leave the area. He is impressed and humiliated by a faith stronger than his own, and meekly agrees. After arranging a final meeting in a different place, they return to their separate quarters determined to recant.

The Christian spends another sleepless night tormented by the loss of his sense of moral superiority and the failure of his precepts in their first real test. At the same time, he feels incapable of renouncing Luxima, although he realises that marriage between them is impossible. Neither "Brahmin priest," "Christian minister," nor "the laws and customs of their respective countries" will sanction the union, and their

continued association can only result in "infamy" and "shame" (2.188;190). Finally, he swears on his crucifix to reform and makes arrangements for his departure. But his lapse is incontrovertible, for there was a witness to the scene, a Hindu whom Luxima mistook for Brahma. He reports the priestess to her establishment, which unites to cast her out and destroy the man who defiled a sacred vestal. The next morning a warning from her grandfather sends her into hiding, and she waits all day in the forest for her twilight rendezvous with Hilarion. When he arrives, her appearance is sadly altered: her face is pale, her hair dishevelled, and she is dressed in the rude habit of an outcaste. Her muntras is wound around her arm with a figure of Camdeo, and a small cross, given to her by Hilarion, hangs around her neck. Now neither Hindu nor Christian, she has no place in either society.

Ultimately, Hilarion shares her fate, for he ignores the pariah's entreaty to leave her to die and save himself. After she faints when they hear the noise of pursuit, he gathers her in his arms and runs to a pile of rocks at the base of a mountain. There he discovers the entrance to Luxima's temple, an Indian equivalent of the Monastery of St. Francis. Hiding behind a pillar, the couple watch "the dreadful ceremony of Brahminical excommunication," a rite in which Hilarion is formally condemned to death for seducing a brachmachira and the Guru ritually anathematises his grand-daughter (2.210). A conch blast ending the ceremony drowns out Luxima's scream of despair, the priests depart, and Hilarion is left alone with the outcaste. She is lying unconscious on the temple floor, "cold," "disfigured" and "abhorred by all" in a place where she was formerly worshipped (2.218). Although he regrets his role in her ruin,

he does not yet renounce the system he serves, and to save her from "heathen vengeance," he asks her to follow him as his "disciple only" and become a nun in Goa. When she consents to this arrangement, Hilarion baptises her at a spring outside the temple, a rite corresponding to his own 'baptism' outside the temple of Lahore. Although he realises she is now abhorrent to Hindus and will bring no converts in her train, he has become "her sole providence," and "a beam of religious triumph" shines in his eyes (2.249;236).

Following Hilarion's Pyhrric victory the fugitives set out for Goa by an obscure route. After an arduous journey out of Kashmir, which is imaged as the Biblical flight from Paradise, they join a large caravan comprised of various nationalities and religions. The priest is viewed as Luxima's seducer, and she is execrated by Hindus, regarded with a mixture of desire and contempt by others, and "suspected by all." The couple are mortified by their notoriety, for both are accustomed to veneration by society. Their experience in the microcosm of the caravan is a depressing index of their future in any social context.

Hilarion is watched particularly closely by a pair of European travellers, who eventually ask him why he makes no attempt to convert the heathens in their group. His reply expresses a key argument of the novel. He claims that proselytising is futile, for there is no separation between the sacred and secular life of the Hindus; their faith embraces every aspect of existence. He argues that without a revolution in the social structure, it is impossible "to effect a change in the religion of sixty millions of people, whose documents claim their authority from the records of the most ancient nations- -

- whose faith is guarded by the pride of rank, the interest of the priesthood, by its own abstract nature, by local habits, and confirmed prejudices" (3.96-7). The men record his statement, and the priest wonders uneasily if his opinions might be construed as heresy by those unfamiliar with Indian culture.

Meanwhile, he is becoming increasingly apprehensive about the failure of his mission and his return to Goa with a beautiful young woman in tow. The situation dictates prudence, but he is unable to establish an appropriate relationship with her. She worships him with the fervour formerly reserved for Brahma, which strengthens his attachment, and his attentions to her become extravagant. But despite a passion which is obvious to all in their itinerant society, he is determined to carry through with his plan, and striving for perfect submission to his will, she makes no objection. Thus, they proceed to Tatta, where they are arrested by agents of the Inquisition. On the return voyage to Goa, the priest meditates on their fate and decides that they are mutual victims of superstition, bigotry and institutional oppression.

The civil and religious establishments of Goa have carefully prepared for the public humiliation of the Portuguese noble and Franciscan monk, and the entire colony turns out to watch a degrading reprise of his arrival from Europe. Although he is handcuffed and worn by suffering, he is still an impressive figure, and the crowds watch silently as he retraces his original route through the city and disappears into the prison of the Inquisition. At the same time, in a travesty of her triumphal entry into Lahore, Luxima is carried to the Dominican convent in a litter led by an agent of the Inquisition and guarded by a squad of Dominican and Jesuit priests. The composition

of the scene indicates the sociopolitical significance of the event: one society and gender has been displaced and taken over by another.

In the convent, Luxima assumes the habit of a novice of St. Dominick and submits to the austere rule of the order. Her transplantation to the domain of Western patriarchy is depersonalising, and she is severely traumatised by the event. She disengages mentally from her environment and develops some of the symptoms of schizophrenia. Meanwhile, the captivity of the Portuguese and Hindu figureheads is exacerbating the tension in a colony already divided by racial and religious issues. Both communities are ripe for insurrection, a situation deriving from the tyranny of the Spanish governors and the tactics of their religious agents, the Jesuits and Dominicans.

Appalled at the results of his experiment, the pundit determines to rescue the victims. He snatches Luxima from the convent and hides her in his home, but he is unable to penetrate Hilarion's prison. Thus, in a ceremony corresponding to the ritual of Brahminical excommunication, the priest is accused of heresy and the seduction of a neophyte and condemned to burn at the stake. He positions himself on the faggots with a martyr's fortitude, but before the flames consume him, Luxima bursts from the crowd she has followed from the pundit's house. Believing the execution is Hilarion's cremation, she rushes to immolate herself on the pyre. He snatches her from the fire and clutches her to his breast, whereupon she is stabbed by a dagger aimed at him and cries aloud to Brahma. The incident ignites the Hindu spectators, a riot ensues and during the fracas, the prisoners escape in a small boat.

The craft has only one oar, but they evade their pursuers, and by evening they are far out at sea. The moonlight illuminates a rocky headland where Hilarion finds a refuge in a subterranean grotto. Here Luxima rededicates herself to Brahma and dies of the wound in her breast. Three days later, when the soldiers of the Inquisition find the cave, it is empty, and the Apostolic Nuncio is never heard of again. However, two decades later, when Portugal has recovered her autonomy and Aurangzeb has become Emperor, a European functionary of the Imperial court visits the Grotto of Congelations. The local inhabitants tell him of a hermit who has recently died there after a residence of many years. They describe him as "'a wild and melancholy man! whose religion was unknown, but who prayed at the confluence of rivers, at the rising and setting of the sun; living on the produce of the soil, he needed no assistance; nor sought any intercourse; and his life, thus slowly wearing away, gradually faded into death.' " The shepherd who discovered his body found him lying before an altar beside a small urn containing ashes, a small blood-stained crucifix, and a dsandum, the sacred thread of the twice-born. The vessel was inscribed 'Luxima,' and the natives now believe the hermit was the criminal who seduced the most famous of their religious women when he "visited their remote and lovely valley in the character of A Christian Missionary" (3.221).

The final statement sums up the main theme of a novel aiming in the first instance to combat the overseas expansion of the English Protestant revival. Owenson depicts the evolution of a missionary in terms that construe his vocation as a mania generated by environmental influences and his endeavour as a pernicious mode of

Western aggression and control. This agenda is carried out by invoking the Black Legend, the pejorative British narrative of Spanish imperialism, and by a complex pattern of imagery representing the missionary enterprise as barbaric and profane. Through the figurative language that maps his pursuit of Luxima, Hilarion is depicted as a lupine marauder, a burglar trespassing on posted ground, an infidel defiling sacred space, and a rapacious despoiler of innocence. By constructing a radical alternative to the concept of the missionary as saviour of souls, Owenson challenges the ideology of an initiative that was integral to Portuguese and Spanish imperialism and currently on the verge of becoming part of British imperial practice.

The argument of the novel is also developed by drawing on the tradition of comparativism developed by Volney, Charles Dupuis, Sir William Drummond, Erasmus Darwin and Richard Payne Knight, who used comparative mythology to discredit Christianity's claims to a singular revelation.[22] Through a painstaking comparison of their hierarchies, rituals, iconography and places of worship, Owenson points out that India will not be improved by importing religion from the West. She shows that Christian societies have their own category of despotic and ritual-ridden brahmins, and that Christianity and Hinduism alike encourage superstition and idolatry. She also draws attention to the fact that the custom of suttee, viewed with justifiable abhorrence by Europeans, has a counterpart in the autos-da-fé of the Inquisition, a Christian institution introduced into India by the Portuguese. The pattern of comparison creates an ironic counterpoint to the missionary's denunciation of heathen customs and his efforts to save Luxima from idolatry.

The argument by analogy is sharpened by the many oblique references to the theological similarities of the two religions. The observations of the pundit and the conversations and practices of the protagonists reveal that both systems espouse a Trinitarian concept of Deity, both are authorized by archaic texts purporting to be divinely inspired, and both incorporate philosophical schools that view material phenomena as the phantasmagoria of a divine mind. The narrative also maps a mutual commitment to the irrational idea that divinity is incarnated and reincarnated in human form and that the suppression of natural instincts can endow a human being with supernatural powers equal to those of a deity. The intersection of the two ascetic traditions is illustrated by Hilarion's efforts to live up to his reputation as a reincarnation of 'the second Christ.' While he follows Francis' monastic rule, repeats his pilgrimage to the East, and reenacts his platonic affair with Clara Sciffi,who became a nun and the founder of a religious order, the missionary passes through the stages of celibate student, lover and husband, socially marginal forest dweller, and isolated mendicant wanderer, the four ashramas (stages) of a Hindu sadhu.[22] The end result is an Indianized version of St. Hilarion (c. 291 - - -c. 371), a pagan who converted to Christianity and became a cave-dwelling hermit in Palestine. The spiritual evolution of the protagonist is carefully plotted to rupture the binary of Eastern mysticism and Western empiricism, a key term in the series of fixed oppositions that have historically structured Western conceptualisation of the Orient.

The antinomial relationship of the Eastern and Western mentality is also called into question by reference to Hindu and Christian responses to the natural world.

Similar to Hinduism, which views nature as the veil of an indwelling divine energy, Christianity incorporates a sacramental view of nature and an affective response to natural phenomena, both of which are characteristic of the Franciscan devotional scheme. The narrative persistently alludes to the tree worship common to the Aryan stock of Europe and India and links the rites of both religious systems to sun and water, both necessary to generation. The linkage denotes their mutual origin in primitive man's perception that sex is the driving force of the natural world, a point emphasised by the equation of the cathedral and the temple with the cave, a multi-cultural symbol of the womb. The portrayal of religious sites and rites draws on the comparativist theory that all religions were originally celebrations of sexuality, a concept that serves the novel's attack on the Evangelicals. Indeed, the tale is a rationalist critique of all religious sects, in which both protagonists are depicted as dupes and victims of philosophies that pervert nature by diverting sexual desire into mystical asceticism. Hinduism, however, is more favourably represented than Christianity, and its ability to tolerate and accommodate heterodox forms of worship is construed as the source of a strength and vitality that has and will confound attempts to convert Hindu devotees to other religions.

The author also affirms the celebration of the female principle in Hinduism and draws on the concept of sakti to promote her feminist and cultural politics. The term denotes the active life force that animates the universe, which in Hindu theology is manifested in and through the female counterparts of Eastern gods [23] and in Owenson's novel in and through the female counterpart of a Western 'divinity.' Luxima's name is

a Latinized version of Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort,[24] a goddess venerated by the votarists of the god and his avatar Krishna, a Hindu counterpart of Christ with an erotic pastoral interlude in his history. Together with the symbolic episode that points to the convergence of the Hindu and Christian traditions in the figures of Christ and Krishna, the linking of Luxima and Lakshmi enables the complex chiasmatic crossings that position the figure of Woman/Other both over and beneath the masculine signifier of the West. Luxima becomes Hilarion's consort, but rather than the filiative Francis/Clara relationship he envisioned, the economy of their association reflects the gender economy of the dominant religious mythology in his new environment. In the same way that Lakshmi is empowered over Vishnu/Krishna in the Hindu cosmos, Luxima is empowered over Hilarion, the Christ figure in the cosmos of the novel. In making the Hindu woman's supreme act of self-sacrifice, she appropriates his role as Christ, redeeming <u>him</u> by <u>her</u> death. In the aftermath of her martyrdom, he becomes <u>her</u> priest, the keeper of her relics and sacristan of her shrine. By representing the femininity associated with the Other as the source of an energy that is greater than masculine power in its ability to recreate identity, Owenson alters the political implications of the sexual/geographical trope that organises the narrative.

Luxima's agency is linked to the vulval landscape of the Vale of Kashmir, a fertile cleft that divides the length of the Himalayan province. This landscape is rendered through the imagery of fecundity associated with the celebration of <u>sakti</u>, rites and representations that sacralize the original procreative act of Kama, the god of love, and his consort Rati, sexual desire. The result is a setting that materialises

Western fantasies of the Orient, yet works to discourage Western intervention in the area by construing India as a habitat that is organically inhospitable to Christianity, a religion that in contrast to Hinduism, has historically devalued and derogated sexuality. The linking of religion and environment in the novel represents religious systems as products of climate and geography, an argument that brings the sociology of Montesquieu to bear on Owenson's critique of the missionary enterprise.

Through allusion to the history of the Mughals, the dominant race in India before the British gained control in the eighteenth century, the tale of Solyman Sheko points to the hazards of religious crusading and displacing native authority in India. Like the Portuguese vanguard on India's West coast, the Islamic invaders who established a foothold in Hindustan between 1200-1500 were intolerant of other religions and determined to subordinate and convert the Hindus. But official policy changed under Akbar, the third ruler of the Mughal dynasty established at Delhi in 1526. He was a liberal committed to the ideal of tolerance, and under his auspices a partial reconciliation of the Islamic and Hindu communities took place. He married a Hindu princess who became the mother of his heir and instituted reforms that gave Hindus an economic and political stake in the Muslim regime. His concessions to the religious majority enabled him to extend his rule over most of the country and inaugurated one of the most illustrious periods of Indian history. The Portuguese, who arrived before the consolidation of Mughal power but did not make such an accommodation, proved to be merely the forerunners of a European invasion that culminated in British control of the subcontinent.

The British takeover was a product of the policies of Akbar's great-grandson, Aurangzeb, a religious militant who usurped the Peacock Throne in 1658 after defeating the armies of his brother Dara Sikoh, the liberal regent and heir of the ailing Shah Jahan. After he seized power Aurangzeb decapitated Dara, imprisoned his father, and destroyed the Hindu-Muslim entente engineered by Akbar. The racial and religious strife resulting from his discrimination against Hindus weakened the nation and precipitated the decline of the Mughals, who were eventually reduced to the status of the Portuguese under the Hapsburgs.[25] The confrontation between Hilarion and Sheko invokes the similarities between Portuguese and Muslim religious imperialism and contrasts it unfavourably with Akbar's politics. Sheko, who personifies the enlightened liberalism that empowered his dynasty, reveres Luxima, respects her status in native society and offers her a partnership role in the Islamic empire. Hilarion, on the other hand, regards her as a desirable conquest, estranges her from her own culture, and relegates her to a subordinate position in a colonial space. He prevails over the Mughal, but his determination to dominate and alter Luxima destroys his power in his own sphere and positions him on the borderlands of culture and society. His history constitutes a veiled warning about the militant tendencies of the British "New Mughals" who had recently supplanted Aurangzeb's successors and were presently becoming a global maritime power similar to sixteenth-century Portugal.

The novel takes issue with an assumption common to orientalists, missionaries and adventurers alike, all of whom believed that an understanding of Indian languages and civilisation would help Westerners to control India conceptually.[26] Owenson

questions a logic predicated on the unassailability of Western systems of reading the world through the subjective transformation catalysed by her hero's practice of oriental scholarship. Hilarion's scientific study of Indian religions and languages does not elevate him to a position of supremacy over Indian society; on the contrary, his attempt to control through knowledge begins the destruction of his social identity. The more familiar he becomes with the geography, culture and society of India, the more his own world view is undermined and his position compromised. Every apparent success in his efforts to establish a commanding position in the country is another step in the process that reduces him to a social cipher.

His confrontation with Luxima plays out the psychodynamics of the colonial encounter in a schematic rendering of the production and politics of hybridity, the inevitable by-product of imperialism. The missionary is a signifier par excellence of imperialist subjectivity, which defines itself through signs of cultural difference from the Other yet is also dependent on the Other for the sense of mastery that enables colonial domination. That the demands of the ego vacillate between the desire to see in the Other a diminutive image of the Self and the impulse to exaggerate and demonize the Other's difference is illustrated by Hilarion's relationship with Luxima. It is marked by a paranoiac response to religious practices that are essentially the same as his own and by the attempt to create a subaltern version of himself. The project is disabling to Hilarion as well as to Luxima because his partial success collapses the binaries that secure his sense of self, a breakdown represented by a confusion of signs. The signifiers of psychic splitting are inscribed first upon his body and eventually on

hers, a moment that severs him irrevocably from his origins and essences. Confronted by a self-projection that is simultaneously Hindu priestess and Christian nun but not fully either one- - - what Homi Bhabha terms "less than one but double"- - - he himself becomes permanently hybridised, a psychic space that is reified by the liminal zone he occupies until he dies.[27]

The evolution of the plot demonstrates the ambivalent power of passive resistance to colonisation, the "sly civility" or conciliatory partial consent to the demands of imperialist force majeure that is at once a sign of defeat and subordination and a mode of opposition to colonial domination.[28] One aspect of the strategy is epitomised in the pundit's dangerous manipulation of Hilarion and another in Luxima's reaction to the Western book, the most powerful technology of European cultural imperialism. To accommodate Hilarion she reads the Bible willingly, but she interprets and evaluates it by reference to the Vedas and thereby makes the cultural narrative of the West ancillary to the cultural narrative of India. Significantly, the incident comes at the Wordsworthian "spot in time" when Hilarion's conception of the world is displaced by the Hindu Weltanschauung, and he consciously perceives Luxima as a divinity. The epiphany puts the authority of the Western world view and its master text radically at issue, and for the first time their spokesman is unable to assert their priority. This is a key transitional moment in the process of silencing that begins in Lahore with Hilarion's first exposure to the evasive acquiescence of the Hindu community and finally leaves him mute and disempowered in an Indian limbo.

The "defensive warfare" that in Homi Bhabha's psychoanalytics of hybridity constitutes colonial resistance to the "narcissistic demands" of the imperial ego relies not only on semantic sabotage but also on mimicry, an imitation that both reflects and distorts imperialist manners, mores, and subjective modes. This form of opposition to imperialist cajolery is illustrated in the post-Kashmiri context of Owenson's narrative. When the aftermath of Hilarion's 'invasion' virtually forces her into compliance with his will, Luxima's mimesis of a Christian neophyte and nun not only affirms but also makes a mockery of Western authority. The very extravagance of her submission (an excess that is culturally determined) and her refusal to renounce Brahma when she espouses Christ constitute an assertion of difference that places the imperial agent in an impossible position and engenders a rebellion against the colonial establishment. The culmination of the project of conversion warns against the personal and public consequences of evangelising India, and in the broader context, of any policies aimed at undermining native authority.

The novel has many features that should have guaranteed its success at a time when Orientalia was becoming the hottest commodity in the British cultural market. The characters are original and exotic, the plot is inventive and suspenseful, the imagery is sexually charged, and the narrative is full of the topographical and cultural description that appealed so strongly to contemporary readers. But if it made a vivid impression on some of the major writers of the period, a point I will return to in the conclusion of this dissertation, it did not sell as well as Owenson's other novels, nor was it controversial or widely reviewed.[29] Given the heterodoxy of the religious and

cultural content, the author's celebrity at the time, and the controversy over Ida, the critical reception of the work is puzzling.

What is also odd is the response of Hepworth Dixon, the author's designated biographer and editor of her papers. He is usually perspicuous in his brief readings of her texts, but his commentary on The Missionary is strikingly inaccurate- - -and unusually caustic. After noting that it was "not so popular as her other novels," he continues:

> The subject is the attempt of a Spanish [sic] priest to convert a Brahmin priestess; but the flesh gets the better of the spirit in this trial; they fall in love with each other's fine eyes, and elope together. The love scenes are warmly coloured, and the situations of the Hindoo priestess are highly critical; but the reader feels disposed to say as Sheridan said, when the servant threw down a china plate with a great crash, without breaking, "You rascal! how [sic] dare you make all that noise for nothing?" Nothing comes of all the danger, and everything remains much as it was in the beginning (emphasis mine)(1. 424-425).

The tone and content of the critique contrasts sharply with Dixon's discussion of the vastly inferior Ida, in which he found redeeming features even though the author herself described the book as "bad." On the other hand, Lady Morgan always considered The Missionary one her best efforts, and she was in the process of revising

it when she died, a project inspired by the Indian Mutiny. Since the Memoirs normally reflects Dixon's respect for Morgan's opinions and practice, his remarks on The Missionary rupture his narrative.

It is illuminating to compare the novel's professional reception with the response of an amateur reader in the post-Romantic, perhaps the Victorian, period. On the fyleaf of an 1834 edition of the text, now the property of Professor Isobel Grundy, a former owner has written: "From beginning to end a most dangerous, impious, and scandalously false tale, better not read." The inscription suggests that the political thrust of the novel was obvious and its representations disturbing to nineteenth-century readers, a message that accounts for its lacklustre performance on the market and the aporias in the criticism. Arguably, the silence, evasions and misreadings of contemporary reviewers constituted a form of denial that was manifested either by rejecting the book as a subject of analysis or by refusing to engage with it on the level of ideology.

In representing imperialism as an antidote to national "torpor," the Other as the anima of the imperialist psyche, and "going native" as a way of controlling and manipulating native society from within, Owenson reproduces stock themes of the Romantic literature of the Orient. But in a radical departure from contemporary discursive norms, these themes are developed in a way that foregrounds the "anxieties of empire," which as Nigel Leask has shown, constitute the repressed content of British Romantic writing on the Orient. In an attempt to subvert the imperialist project in India, Owenson exploits the unconscious fears of racial degeneration, miscegenation,

addiction and loss of cultural sovereignty that troubled readers and writers at the metropolitan centre of Britain's expanding Eastern empire.[30] Whereas normally these anxieties are structurally confined or circulate silently as metaphors and imagery in writing that represents the Orient as a Western resource, they are thematised and materialised as lived experience in The Missionary. Confronted by the spectacle of the repressed played out as a version of normal life on the surface of the narrative, nineteenth-century readers recoiled.

The fragmentation of the sovereign subject of imperialist romance, the Christian hero on the colonial frontier, is dramatised in a way that anticipates a memoir which according to Leask, realises the period's "worst dreams of the squandering of civic and personal identity in the imperialist project."[31] It is an account of a drug-induced nightmare of conquest, revenge and degeneracy included in the text of Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1821). "I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed,"[32] writes De Quincey in unconscious imitation of Owenson, who also inscribed the image of a conqueror/victim who is priest, idol and sacrifice in a narrative that represents the dark side of the imperial dream. If the Western fantasy of the Orient is fulfilled in The Missionary, the price is the immolation of the identity that made the imperial subject supreme in his own sphere and impelled him to the extremities of the world of the Other.

Notes

1. Javeed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 8-10.

2. Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India, 4th edn. (New York: Oxford, 1993), pp. 145-148.

3. Ainslie Thomas Embree, Charles Grant and British Rule in India (New York: Columbia, 1962), p. 118.

4. "Observations," Parliamentary Papers, 10 (1812-13), paper 262, pp. 27, 80. Quoted in Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, p. 80.

5. A. T. Embree, Charles Grant, pp. 119, 120, 152-157; Javeed Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 80-82.

6. See Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 11-46.

7. Nigel Leask claims that Owenson's principal sources are Jones' "On the Philosophy of the Asiatics" and "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindoos." See British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 126.

8. See Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 23, 29-30, 36-37.

9. "The second discourse," Asiatick Researches, vol. 1, p. 407. Quoted in S. N. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-century British Attitudes to India (1968; London: Sangam Books Ltd., 1987) p. 109.

10. J. Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 22-44.

11. See Ungoverned Imaginings, Chapter 4, pp. 124-150.

12 Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 206.

13. See Ungoverned Imaginings, pp. 79-80.

14. Tradeful Merchants: The Portrayal of the Capitalist in Literature (London, 1981), pp. 59-60. Quoted in Peter Hulme, Colonial Encounters, p. 315.

15. Richard F. Patteson, "King Solomon's Mines: Imperialism and Narrative Structure," Journal of Narrative Technique, 8, p. 113. Cited in Rebecca Stott, "The Dark Continent: Africa and the Female Body in Haggard's Adventure Fiction," Feminist Review, 32 (Summer 1989), p. 70.

16. For a history of Portugal see David Birmingham, A Concise History of Portugal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

17. Sydney Owenson, The Missionary; An Indian Tale, 3 vols. (London: Stockdale, 1811), 1.2.

18. See Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India, p. 138; K. G. Jayne, Vasco da Gama and his Successors 1460-1580 (1910; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970); James Broderick, St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) (New York: Doubleday, 1957).

19. During his early years in India Jones relied on the pundits for knowledge and interpretations of Indian law, but he became convinced that they sometimes misled or deceived him, and that their indigenous knowledge of Indian systems was a possible threat to imperial authority. See S. N. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones, p. 118; J. Majeed, Ungoverned Imaginings, p. 20-21.

20. See Rebecca Stott, "The Dark Continent," pp. 69-89.

21. According to Lawrence S. Cunningham in Saint Francis of Assisi (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), pp. 52-54, Canticle of Brother Sun appealed strongly to nineteenth-century critics, who characterized Francis as a "nature mystic" on the basis

of the lyric. Translation from the Italian is problematic, because the Italian word 'per' can mean 'for' or 'through'. The latter meaning yeilds a translation that aligns the Canticle with Vedanta Hinduism as represented by Owenson. The first two stanzas are the most relevant to Hilarion's argument with Luxima:

> Most High, omnipotent, good Lord
> To you alone belong praise and glory,
> Honor and blessing.
> No man is worthy to breathe thy name.
>
> Be praised, my Lord, for all your creatures,
> In the first place for/through the blessed Brother Sun
> who gives us the day and enlightens us through you.
> He is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
> Giving witness of thee, Most Omnipotent One.

22. See Ungoverned Imaginings, p. 184.

23. S. Wolpert, A New History of India, p. 82.

24. N. Leask, British Romantic Writers and the East, p.102.

25. S. Wolpert, A New History of India, pp. 107, 126-134, 149-186.

26. See S. N. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones, p. 10.

27. "Signs Taken For Wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817," The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 112.

28. See Homi Bhabha, "Sly Civility,"October, 34 (1985), pp. 71-80. See also Nigel Leask's discussion of Bhabha's work in British Romantic Writers and the East, pp. 80-88.

29. The discussion in the Critical Review, 53, 23 (June 1811), 182-195, is exemplary. After a long plot summary, the critic concludes with a few typically ambivalent remarks on Owenson's style. In the last paragraph, he writes:

> We forbear to make many remarks on this performance of Miss Owenson, after having given the heads of the story so amply. But we must in justice say that in painting the missionary's feelings, his virtuous struggles, his remorse, his love, and the delicacy of his conduct and behaviour to the beloved object of his affections, Miss Owenson has displayed great force of expression, and a strong glow of rich colouring. At the same time we cannot but condemn her numerous conceits and her frequently affected phraseology. Miss Owenson should learn to divest her style of its luxuriant redundancies and to write in a more simple and natural manner. She would then have more, and more permanent admirers.

30. See Nigel Leask, British Romantic Writers and the Orient, Chapter 1.

31. Ibid., p. 5.

32. Thomas De Quincey, his Life and Writings, with Unpublished Correspondence, ed. Alexander Japp (London: John Hogg, 1890), p. 109. Quoted in Leask, pp. 4-5, 228.

Conclusion

This study has tried to account for for the reasons why the novels signed 'Sydney Owenson' were considered the work of a woman of genius by readers such as Percy Shelley, Baron Denon, the Marquis de Lafayette and the members of the Academie Française, who gave the author a special reception when she visited Paris in 1815. What it has not addressed is the difference between the contemporary reception of the novels and the 'reader response' of the post-modern institution of English studies. Although they constitute the first sustained attempt to use the genre as a vehicle of minority nationalism, they have been as consistently ignored by postcolonial critics as they were by post-Victorian and modernist scholars. That they have not so far been part of the feminist and postcolonial reassessment of literary tradition is undoubtedly a consequence of Sydney Owenson's strategies of representation, many of which have been and to a large extent still are associated with technical incompetence and complicity with patriarchal/colonial discourse. Here in the conclusion, I will address the issues of style and substance that have militated against a reappraisal of the novels and argue that their ideological ambiguities and rhetorical anomalies notwithstanding, they are worthy of serious scrutiny by the academy.

Not least of the features that problematise the texts is their language, an extreme form of the high sentimental style that has been equated with 'bad' writing since it went out of fashion in the 1820s and lost its association with original genius,

authentic subjectivity and social reform.[1] Indeed, Owenson's articulation of the language of sensibility was often criticised by readers who were still attuned to its idiom, as Ina Ferris points out in her discussion of the author's contemporary critical reception. Noting the ambivalence of reviewers impressed by Owenson's imagination and eloquence yet troubled by what they termed her "swelling diction and high-sounding sensibility,"[2] Ferris observes that her style "hollows out her language," producing sound without substance through "metaphors of high colour and high feeling."[3] This language, Ferris argues, creates an impression of linguistic excess that her reviewers perceived as sexually aberrant. Thus, in their discourse her text is constructed as "an instance of the female grotesque."[4]

Not only the style but also the structure of the novels has been problematic to readers and critics conditioned by the literary aesthetic so successfully practised by Jane Austen, the Irish writer's then much less successful contemporary. Owenson's practice of the novel was governed by the desire to propagandise and inform, and these imperatives had important artistic consequences in her willingness to interrupt the forward movement of the plot with polemical debates and a profusion of realistic detail and documentary material. Although she was technically accomplished in the use of traditional devices such as parallelism, symbolically resonant scenes and settings and Theophrastan characters, she failed- - - or refused- - - to integrate plot and episode and to fuse her various discursive modes into the type of unified composition achieved by the canonical authors of the Romantic period.

Owenson also resisted the conventions of the well-made novel by imposing an allegorical superstructure on her plots, a device that unifies her diverse political and philosophical themes but inhibits the complex characterisation that distinguishes canonical fiction. Not only the minor characters but also the protagonists are personifications of ideas and as a result, they tend to be two dimensional constructs with an obvious political valence. In order for the heroines to be who they are in the text, embodiments of the virtues of nation and gender, they must be paragons, and their future consorts must be potentially so. Most of the protagonists, then, epitomise traditional ideals of male and female elegance and nobility. Their verbal exchanges are typically stilted and unnatural, for dialogue is the vehicle of ideas and information or an index of superior sensibility rather than an accurate imitation of normal human speech. For the most part, the techniques of realism are used to render the physical and cultural environment rather than to create the illusion of actual human character and experience. Even Glorvina, who captured the imagination of audiences throughout the West, is individualised by setting, performativity and the insignia of ethnicity rather than by the dynamic interiority that makes Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse memorable.

The stereotypical character of Owenson's romantic heroines is probably one reason why her texts have not so far been a locus of feminist criticism, and another is likely her treatment of the sexual trope of colonial relations. This participates in the economy that defines woman by reference to the male as a human norm and collaborates with the discourses that construct women as idealised projections of men's

desires. To impress readers with the glamour, virtue and fascination of the gender/culture represented by the heroine, her representation is usually mediated by an aristocratic male who is attracted by the display of her attributes. Her posture and physique generate an obsessive interest in the observer, and she is fixed in his gaze. The point of view foregrounds and magnifies the emblem of Woman/Other, but the signifier is centred and organised by reference to the phallus, and its play is therefore contingent. Moreover, the extremely narrow angle of vision produced by the narrative technique and the emphasis on performance and display pornographise the object of the look. The female body, then, is inscribed in the economies of desire and domination that structure patriarchal discourses of women and colonials.

The most troubled of Owenson's attempts to direct the libidinal energy of the imperialist master trope to the service of feminism/decolonisation is Ida of Athens, where the portrayal of gender relations exploits Western sexual fantasies of racially transgressive encounters between vulnerable and voluptuous European women and lascivious and domineering Islamic potentates. When the heroine acts in court before a representative of Ottoman patriarchy, performance and display become overtly erotic. During her brilliant defence of Osmyn, her bosom heaves, her veil slips, and she is literally exposed before Achmet and an audience of men. Predictably, the inadvertent strip tease inspires lust rather than veneration in the tyrant, who is on the point of ravishing her on a couch in the harem when news comes of Osmyn's escape. Ida acts boldly when the opportunity arises, but in contrast to her parallel 'escape' from Lord B.'s villa, she is not the agent of her liberation, nor does she effect the sensualist's

reform. Achmet is overcome, not by her virtue and genius but rather by the treachery of Oriental women. Thus, the feminist theme of the novel is compromised by a subtext that is not only latently pornographic but covertly racist and misogynistic as well.

Indeed, contradictions of this sort are pervasive in the text, which is fractured by its strategies of racial individuation and social critique. In order to emphasise the corruptive effects of the 'Ottoman yoke' and Greek affinity with the West, the author reproduces the axioms of Western imperialist discourses of the Orient by demonizing the Ottomans, embodying the virtues of the 'authentic' Greek character in the half-English product of an English educator, and representing Greeks without connections to the West as partial and flawed. Even the putative hero, Osmyn, reinforces Western notions of the rashness and instability of the Greek character. Rather than gearing her representation to refute the charge, through her description of Osmyn's appearance and disposition Owenson connects him to the figure of Alcibiades in Plutarch's Lives, and thus construes impetuousness as a trait of the classical heroic temperament. Unfortunately, in her narrative the Socratic antithesis to the warrior is English, and therefore her appropriation of Plutarch reinforces Western notions about the superiority of Western judgment. Furthermore, Osmyn is overshadowed by Lord B., whose relationship with Ida is given much more textual space than the Greek's, and who proves to be a more noble man than his rival. The cumulative effect of the plot and characterisation skews the narrative into collusion with Anglocentrism and anti-Greek prejudice.

The attempt to use the trope of Oriental despotism as a critique of British patriarchy is similarly compromised because it fails to interrogate the vehicle of the metaphor and therefore reinforces Western racist assumptions about the inherent decadence of the Turks and their civilisation. Whereas the English volupturary is recuperable, his Islamic alter ego is not, and Jumeli, who has no Western counterpart in the novel, is even more depraved than her father. In this instance, Owenson's utilisation of dominant Western stereotypes as weapons against imperialism, colonialism and the subordination of women uncritically reinscribed a figure that was used to justify European intervention and colonisation in the East.[5]

That the novels were politically liberating and artistically influential despite their non-standard prose, transgressions of generic boundaries and ideological ambivalence can attributed to the relativity of concepts such as 'emancipatory' and 'good writing.' One of Owenson's strengths as an author was an acute instinct for emerging trends, a 'sixth sense' that is manifested in the stylistic differences between the five novels under discussion and her sixth, O'Donnel (1814), which was published at a transitional moment of a market that had been dominated by gothic and sentimental fiction. The appearance of the work marked a change in the author's signature and a change in her style. From a composer of romantic fables she became a composer of the novel of social realism in the manner of Scott and Edgeworth. Appearing as it did on the threshold of the period when "The Luximas, the Wanderers, and the innumerable spawn of the Mysteries of Udolpho, were gradually sinking into the tomb of all the Capulets," as a contemporary critic described the late 1810s,

O'Donnel performed strongly in a highly competitive market.[6] It was a best-seller in the year that saw the publication of Scott's Waverley, Maria Edgeworth's Patronage, and Jane Austen's Mansfield Park.[7]

The response of modern biographers and critics to the transition is summed up by Ann H. Jones, who observes that "it would be difficult from the stylistic evidence alone to believe that the sharply ironic Lady Morgan could ever have written the novels which appeared under the name Sydney Owenson."[8] What Jones and others who have made the same observation have not seriously considered is why Owenson obviously chose to write as she did in the earlier work, ignored the advice of critics and admirers who urged restraint, and nevertheless became one of the most successful British novelists of the post-Union decade. In my view, her unorthodox style was contrived to create a prose version of Ossian, which created literary tastes to which she appealed despite the reservations of some of her critics and readers. The exclamations, syntactical irregularities, inflated diction and resulting impression of hollowness that characterise her rhetoric are also distinguishing features of Macpherson's language, which was devised to address the emotions rather than the intellect. Fiona Stafford notes that "a deep sense of emptiness" is produced by Macpherson's unconventional phrasing, which is calculated to suggest "an arrangement of music, corresponding to the emotions of the speaker." The play of signifiers, Stafford argues, sets up a series of "echoes and refrains" that have "a semi-hypnotic effect, drawing the reader into the intangible landscape where the characters are insubstantial voices in the wind."[9]

This is a strong reading, but few people today perceive the 'hypnotic effect' of Macpherson's language, which has seemed bombastic, bathetic and monotonous to most post-Romantic readers. However, Owenson and most of the early nineteenth-century reading public still responded both somatically and intellectually to his rhetoric.[10] To them, it embodied the spontaneity, acute sensitivity and passionate individualism of authentic genius, and the evidence suggests that most of her original readers were attracted and impressed by Owenson's prose rendition of his verse. Her fiction, often criticised but seldom ignored, was widely reviewed and read by all sectors of the reading public. The obsessive critical return to the issue of style and the recurrent note of scandalised disapproval of a language that was chaste in content no doubt signifies, as Ferris suggests, a "recoil" from female "linguistic excess."[11] But it might also testify to the libidinal energy or "jousissance" produced by a liberating transgression of linguistic conventions and protocols. It seems likely that in her day, Owenson's "swelling diction" carried an erotic charge that both stimulated and unsettled her readers.

Like the language of her texts, Owenson's disregard for canonical standards of fictional unity and verisimilitude was evidently not considered a fault by most of her original readers, who were avid consumers of documentary travels and enjoyed being informed about foreign cultures and landscapes by a romantic tale. Her sensitivity to contemporary notions of literary taste and value is signalised not only by O'Donnel but also by the The Wild Irish Girl, a work that exploited a market created by the struggle against Napoleon and the eighteenth-century Celtic Revival. The convergence

of politics and culture generated a militant English nationalism articulated in a popular demand for information about the Celtic remnants of the United Kingdom, a trend that was perceived at its inception by Richard Phillips, the powerful London publisher who brought out The Novice of Saint Dominick. Thus he encouraged Owenson to produce a work on Ireland, but he advised her to model it on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Turkish letters. Although she was relatively young, inexperienced, and unknown at the time, Owenson was convinced that the novel was the best vehicle for an informative narrative of her country, so she disregarded Phillips' advice and ignored a letter expressing his opinion that "[a] matter-of-fact and didactic novel is neither one thing nor another, and suits no class of readers."[12] He had good reason to be grateful that she trusted her own instincts, for the novel she produced was one of his most successful publishing ventures. The Wild Irish Girl had a pervasive cultural influence, and it is a key text in the discursive field that engendered ethnic fashions, ethnic pageants, immersion courses in language and civilisation and politico-cultural movements such as the Felibèrge in Occitania.

If Glorvina and Owenson's other female protagonists seem superficial and conventional today, they were nevertheless a progressive model of femininity in the early 1800s, a time when women in life and literature were thoroughly domesticated. The author pays fulsome lip service to the ideology of Domestic Woman and indeed reinforces the notion that the characteristics and roles of women naturally complement those of men. But her construction of female identity opposes the norms of women's writing in the nineteenth century by insisting that the private is political.[13] The

household in her fiction is a politico-historical matrix, sexual relations are a locus of power relations between genders, classes and cultures and the proper practice of domesticity involves an active patriotism that invests the female's 'natural' role with a public dimension. The politicisation of domesticity works to authorise what was considered an 'unnatural' education for women and to legitimate their participation in public discourse. In rejecting the concept of a private female space outside and apart from history and politics, Owenson resisted a discourse that naturalised women's containment in the private sphere.

In order to market her heterodox model of Domestic Woman and her domain, Owenson had to contend with a tradition that represented women's writing and speaking in public as a form of prostitution.[14] To dismantle the equation, she represents female performance as therapy, a strategy empowered by the point of view. The performing woman is transformed within male consciousness from an embodiment of impropriety to an agent of moral reform and spiritual renewal. St. Clair is cured of a crippling depression, Mortimer and Lord B. are rehabilitated after being corrupted by courtly libertinism, and the public men, Montargis and Osmyn, learn moderation and restraint. Even Hilarion, whose highly developed superego is demolished by his confrontation with Luxima, is rescued from spiritual pride, the deadliest sin, and brought to a condition of true Christian humility.

As Ellen Moers points out in Literary Women, the performing heroine (an innovation she incorrectly attributes to Germaine de Staël) appealed to ambitious and talented young women who were frustrated by laws and traditions that militated

against female participation in public life and against public recognition of female achievement.[15] Women were confined to the domestic sphere not only by their education but also by laws and conventions that discouraged them from living and entertaining alone, negotiating their own contracts, and managing their own money. Either consciously or subliminally aware that the subordination of women was underwritten by the performance/prostitution trope, Owenson undertook to alter its terms. If her generic heroine colludes to some extent with patriarchal representations of women, the construct also refutes them in a way that was psychologically empowering to women at a time when respectable participation in public life was completely contingent on male support and approval.

The social ramifications of Owenson's vision of female agency are most strongly evident in the events that followed the publication of The Wild Irish Girl. The author and her heroine were immediately associated in the public mind, an identification that Owenson encouraged by semi-public performances of Irish folk music and dance and accessories such as an Irish cloak and harp. Her literary and theatrical art catapulted the former governess into British high society and opened up a future that transformed fiction into lived experience. It included a patrician husband who encouraged, supported, and applauded her performances, a marriage contract that gave her control of her own money, a social triumph in Paris, a reputation as Dublin's most important salonnière and the power to exert political influence and give substantial help to refugees. Her ability to embody the wish-fulfilment dreams of the women of her age in a persuasive and socially acceptable form gave birth to an identity

that was a positive example to other women with talent, ambition and an assertive temperament. Lionel Stevenson calls her, incorrectly, Britain's "first successful professional woman author," but he is probably more accurate in his claim that she was "the first to rise to social, intellectual and financial prestige" solely on her professional performance.[16] At any rate, her writing was one of the discursive events that contributed to the gradual redefinition of women's role in society and culture.

The emancipatory potential and contemporary appeal of the Owensonian heroine is also evident in the text of de Staël's Corinne; or Italy (1807), a best-seller that according to Ellen Moers inspired young female writers in Britain and America throughout the nineteenth century.[17] Owenson's Ida has been described by critics contemporary and modern as a derivative of Corinne, but there are even stronger correspondences between de Staël's harp-playing improvisatrice and Imogen, 'the Muse of the Arno', whose talents as a bardic improviser and salonnière electrify Florentine and Parisian high society. A particularly salient example of de Staël's debt to Owenson is Corinne's coronation in Rome, a scene that is strikingly similar to Imogen's triumph at the French court in its vision of the formal, public recognition of female genius. The similarities between Owenson's work and that of the most prominent literary woman of the age were recognised by contemporaries who called Owenson the 'Irish de Staël' after Corinne was published, a reputation that might have inspired her attempt to represent herself as a female philosopher in Ida.

The ideological ambivalence of her novel of Greece could be symptomatic of a latent prejudice against the Orient, but such an assumption is not supported by the

favourable representation of Islam in her next novel. The racist subtext is far more likely a by-product of the diaspora discourse that Owenson was popularising for Western audiences. As we have seen, the ideologues of the Greek revolution railed against Ottoman tyranny, castigated the Greek elites and propagated the myth that the contemporary inhabitants of Greece had a quintessentially Western identity. The novel is typical of the literature of philhellenism, which subtended Eurocentrism and eventually served imperialism in the Orient in its support of what was in the contemporary context an unequivocally liberal cause.[18] Furthermore, for all its sympathy with the Western liberalism and republican sentiments of the Greek nationalists, Owenson's text does divulge the truths that were suppressed in their propaganda. The relative liberality of Ottoman rule and the power and vitality of the Greek community within the regime are depicted in the character of the Rosemelis' life in Athens and the Turkish governor's willingness to negotiate and compromise to marry Ida. The strong Turkish influence on Greek culture is registered and favourably delineated in the styles of the temple annex and Ida's London villa, Greek affinity for the Ottomans is acknowledged in Osmyn's romance and Ida's friendship with Jumeli, and the importance of the Eastern cultural and religious tradition of Byzantium, which was preserved in Russia and the Greek Orthodox establishment, is adumbrated in a number of ways and emphasised in the novel's conclusion. Thus, despite the author's lack of first-hand knowledge of the country and the distortions of neo-Hellenic propaganda, the novel does suggest and to some extent affirm the actual character of contemporary Greece.

Nevertheless, Owenson's postcolonial treatment of Orientalist discourse is much more consistent and sure in The Missionary, although Nigel Leask represents it as a transparently orientalist production in his British Romantic Writers and the East (1992). He refers to the tale repeatedly in his discussion of Shelley, who was fascinated by the figure of Luxima and according to Leask, returned to it "obsessively in his oriental poems."[19] Leask pays serious attention to Owenson's narrative and correctly identifies its political project as an attack on the "evangelical policies of cultural assimilation."[20] However, his interest in The Missionary is confined to its influence on Shelley, and his reading is flawed by oversights that reinforce Owenson's reputation as a second-rate writer who inadvertently inspired more progressive and/or talented minds than her own.

The problems in Leask's account of the novel apparently derive from the assumption that Owenson supported Jones' brand of imperialism because her text supports Jones' contention that Hinduism has affinities with Western religion. Leask claims that Owenson equates Luxima's Vedanta Hinduism with her own "enlightened European deism," an argument that is not supported by the narrator's aspersions on Vedanta's platonic metaphysics or the views of the pundit, whose materialist philosophy is the actual counterpart of the author's beliefs. According to Leask, she creates an analogy between Hinduism and deism to construct "a definition of Hinduism which is acceptable to the 'orientalist' European mind (that is to say, a definition 'feminised' into the subordinate term of the binary opposition)."[21] He points out that Hilarion "ends up as a hybrid rather in Homi Bhabha's sense," but

curiously blind to the significance of the mutation, he claims that The Missionary is structured by "neat dichotomies" that Shelley "collapses- - - or refuses" in "Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude."[22] In Leask's reading of the two works, Shelley's inscription of the colonial encounter transforms the novel's Western wish-fulfillment fantasy of India into a self-destructive dream that "alters the ideological content" of the imperialist discourse that Owenson mechanically reproduces.

Like his book as a whole, Leask's interpretation of "Alastor" is excellent, but he misses the subversiveness of the poem's pre-text, which he describes as "a word for word mouthpiece for Jones' orientalism."[23] In effect, he construes The Missionary as an undeveloped female resource ("a sourcebook of orientalist stereotypes articulated as metaphors of gender") which was colonised by a dynamic male imagination.[24] In his account, Owenson's supine subliterary text was fertilised and transformed by the potent pen of Shelley into a site of "revolutionary enlightenment" and several works of noble art. [25] Ironically, the chauvinistic subtext underlies a critique that affirms the feminist thrust of "Alastor," which Leask attributes to the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft.

Shelley was evidently more attuned to the politics of the novel than Leask is, for he reproduced them in his poem along with versions of Owenson's characters, settings, and verdant bridal imagery. Moreover, "Alastor" and his other oriental productions are not the only notable poetic works influenced by the novel. The Missionary also anticipates the themes and content of Thomas Moore's Lalla Rook (1817), and Moore's correspondence indicates that the links between the two texts are

not fortuitous.[26] "The Veiled Prophet of Khorasson," the first of the four verse tales set into the prose framework of Lalla Rookh, resembles The Missionary in its plot and imagery as well as in its female protagonist, the priestess Zelica. The third tale, "The Fire-Worshippers," corresponds to the novel in its use of Orientalia for anti-imperialist and pro-Irish propaganda. According to Javed Majeed, this part of the work is remarkable for "the way in which different perspectives are played off against each other "[27] and for its construction of "an alternative Irish narrative to that of the Protestant ascendancy."[28] Just as Owenson implicitly compares the bigotry and intolerance of Spanish rule in Goa to British rule in Ireland, Moore covertly drives home the similarity between what he represents as the intolerance of the Islamic colonisers of Iran and the bigotry of the Irish Protestant establishment.[29] If, as Majeed suggests, Lalla Rookh is one of the orientalist productions that demonstrates the limitations of Said's thesis by proving that imperial subjects sometimes deconstructed orientalist discourse just as Said himself has done,[30] the same is true of The Missionary. In the latter work as in Moore's best seller, the imagery of the exotic East is "part of a larger strategy" of resisting imperialism and promoting Irish self-determination.[31]

Like Moore and other liberal authors writing in the period, Owenson usually refused direct confrontation with British imperialism because the establishment that controlled literary production was governed by the conservative ruling class. The Missionary is consistent with her four previous novels in this regard, but it is nevertheless a radical representation of the social and psychic dislocations and the permanent antagonisms created by nations seeking world hegemony. Owenson

rigorously interrogates the text that made British rule in India appear a moral duty and a civilising mission, a narrative produced by orientalists, Utilitarians and Evangelicals alike. Her conventionally seductive India appears to invite Western intervention and control, but it proves to be a geographical space dynamically occupied by a culture that rivals and eventually subverts and disempowers the intrusive culture of the West.

Leask's failure to perceive the complex self-reflexivity of The Missionary is symptomatic of the attitude of the academy, which has typically underrated the author and her work. This tendency is all too obvious in the the only book-length study of her fiction to date, James Newcomer's Lady Morgan the Novelist. In readings remarkable for the confusion they reflect, Newcomer trivialises and disparages most of the novels of a woman who he claims is rightly known as one of Ireland's most important writers. His interpretation of The Missionary, which argues that "every sentence, on every page, is a reminder of the weaknesses that plague even her best writing elsewhere,"[32] typifies the critical oxymorons that rupture a text aiming to prove that Morgan "deserves greater attention than she has received to date in the twentieth century."[33]

If I have overstated Owenson's artistic control in this study, I have done so to correct a narrative that has tended to represent the success of her novels as more or less inexplicable. As Newcomer's readings indicate, her text is highly resistant to analysis in conventional terms, but the tools are now available for more useful critique than has so far been customary. The reading strategies of postcolonialism offer a particularly productive approach to the tales, for they allow us to situate them in a counter-

canonical tradition and view them as something other than the work of an author who, although talented, was unable to master the techniques of the well-made novel. In the postcolonial critical context, the impulse to disunity and the linguistic aberrations that characterise Sydney Owenson Morgan's novels from first to last can be viewed as manifestations of a powerful resistance to the norms of the centre and agents of a liberating oppositional discourse.

Notes

1. In The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 51, Ina Ferris claims that the sentimental style was out of fashion when Owenson began publishing novels. However, R. F. Brissenden notes that the cult of Werther was still in full swing in the 1800s and that while parodies of the sentimental novel began to emerge in the late eighteenth century, few had been published by 1815 when Peacock's Nightmare Abbey came out. He attributes the suppression of anti-sentimental works to a market determined by the persistence of the taste for sentimental writing. See Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1974), pp. 259. 268. 272.

2. Monthly Review, n. s., 57 (1808), p. 383. Quoted in The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 47.

3. The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 47.

4. Ibid., p. 47.

5. F. Venturi, "Oriental Despotism," pp. 133-142.

6. "On the Living Novelists," Gold's London Magazine 2 (1820), p. 265. Quoted in The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 81.

7. Ann H. Jones, Ideas and Innovations, p. 200.

8. Ibid., pp. 197-198.

9. The Sublime Savage, p. 109.

10. Napoleon, for example, said "I like Ossian. . . for the same reasons that I like to hear the whisper of the wind and the waves of the sea." J. C. Herold, ed. The Mind of Napoleon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 155. Napoleon carried only two books on his campaigns, Werther and Ossian. Quoted in Paul J. deGategno, James Macpherson, p. 123.

11. The Achievement of Literary Authority, p. 47.

12. Sir R. Phillips to Sydney Owenson, October 16, 1805. Memoirs, 1. 254-255.

13. See Nancy K. Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 1-12.

14. See Margaret W. Ferguson, "Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn's Oroonoko," Women, "Race" and Writing, p. 214.

15. Literary Women (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1976), p.174.

16. "Preface" The Wild Irish Girl.

17. Literary Women, pp. 178-83.

18. Martin Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation, vol. 1:The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985 (London: Free Association Books, 1987), p. 291.

19. p. 102. The Missionary's influence on Shelley was first noted by Lionel Stevenson, who includes pertinent correspondence between the poet and James Hogg on pp.132-33 of The Wild Irish Girl. Shelley called the novel "a divine thing," and in a letter written a few days later, said , "Since I have read this book I have read no other. But I have thought strangely!" The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 2 vols, Ed. Roger Ingpen (London: Pitman and Sons, 1909), p. 132. vol. 1, pp. 101, 109. The novel's influence on "Alastor," as Leask observes, was previously discussed by John Drew in his India and the Romantic Imagination (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 46.

20. British Romantic Writers and the East, p. 128.

21. Ibid., p. 128.

22. Ibid., p. 125,127.

23. Ibid., p. 127.

24. Ibid., p, 126.

25. Ibid., p. 127.

26. Moore first mentioned Lalla Rookh in 1811, the year The Missionary was published (See Majeed 95), and Lionel Stevenson notes that he sent "anxious messages" to his publisher, Murray, for a copy of the novel when he was preparing to write (133).

27. Ungoverned Imaginings, p. 92.

28. Ibid., p. 95.

29. See ibid., p. 95.

30. Ungoverned Imaginings, p. 5.

31. Ibid., 87-92.

32. p. 30.

33. p. 8.

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